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A LOVER OF THE CHAIR

A SERIES OF ESSAYS

BY
SHERLOCK BRONSON GASS

THE theoretical lover of the title piece becomes the sedentary humorist of the rest, and maintains his point vigorously but with urbanity and an underlying humor against the pressures of contemporary America—smokes, dines in obscure restaurants, talks with his friends and his enemies, and manages in the end to have pictured something of the intellectual and artistic life of the times.

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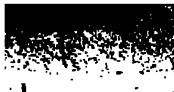
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A LOVER OF THE CHAIR

This One



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A LOVER OF THE CHAIR

BY
SHERLOCK BRONSON GASS



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To
PROSSER HALL FRYE

PREFACE

WHAT I have tried to treat with consistent seriousness in these essays is the point of view of the central figure, whose outlook was intended to give to the series some measure of continuity and singleness of purpose. A fling at the spirit of one's age is not to be indulged in lightly, though it may, I hope, be undertaken with good humor. That, at all events, was the point of view of the Lover of the Chair.

S. B. G.

June 28, 1919

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A Lover of the Chair

I

A LOVER OF THE CHAIR

ONCE over the border of a stormy youth — the wrong border, alas, he was none the less inclined to say — he felt a curious serenity of spirit, which gave him for a brief searching birthday a disturbing qualm. It came over him suddenly that his present restful content was the sign of approaching age. He was concerned that he was not more concerned about certain losses that those storms had involved him in — certain shores that they had beaten him back from. They had driven him far enough about, sometimes into ports he had little pride in remembering. But he was out of it now, he told himself. His youth was over, he was as he was, and there was nothing for it but to take himself so. He could settle back upon an ironic survey of life and find a pleasant spice in his aloof contentment.

Whatever the quality of his aloofness, his irony was real enough to flash back upon himself; and presently he found it smiling with the perception that his losses were being accorded more than a scornful hearing, and being dismissed with but a feminine *no*. The occasional flashes of old moods that now after a long period came back upon him were making him

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linger over the sense that there were starry parts of the common life that had slipped by him and left him untouched. He had the spirit, however, to combat his regrets, and he settled back not uncomfortably upon the serenity of his new-found leisure.

He had the materials for contentment. There were inbred habits of simplicity, and the thrill of adventure in expenditure that are essential to wringing luxury from any income, and can wring it from any; and a taste that could find its pleasure in lining his study with books and brooding among them buried in one and at arm's length from the rest. He had toned his library with the deep oranges and browns that bound his present to certain serene years of his childhood and overleaped the interval of troubled youth. There was enough of an income to give him travel when he cared for it. There was, perhaps above all, the rich heritage of an improvident family — an unconcern for a possible rainy day. Add to all this a habit of detachment that left him free to meet the present humor for humor and his equipment for content was reasonably complete.

He had indeed some mental reservations as to this humor of his. He knew that it had little outward wit to match the subtlety of his inner perceptions of the foibles and inconsistencies of his own and others' dancing to the spasmodic tune of life. And he saw in this lack of explicit wit the explanation of a characteristic of his — the fewness and intensity of his friendships. For with perhaps less than the normal ability to flash out the quality of his perceptions, he could reveal himself only to the

rare and old acquaintances whose outlook was enough like his own to make a word or an allusion carry the quality of his thought. With more expressiveness he could have won a more universal response, and would have been no doubt content with less delicately appreciative ears. As it was, he put a value upon the friends he had that was the greater for their necessarily deeper thrust.

It was the quality of his humor, however, that it could be amused at his own foibles, and thus, as he could smile to observe, it was rarely likely to be graveled for matter. It served, at least, its inner purpose with him in keeping his temper unsoured, in relieving the somberness of reflection, and of keeping him amused at the spectacle of a life that seemed to him none too heartening in itself.

All in all he prized the fortune that had brought him to his present station. It gave him a competence with leisure, work that he could look upon as of decent importance, and an attitude to life that commanded as well as permitted his indulgence in the kind of exercise for which leisure is the convenient term.

He paid for this fortune, indeed, by a seclusion that at moments, in late afternoons when the sun fell warmly upon the deepening colors of his library, or in winter when the lights were lit before the dinner hour called him away to bleak boarding houses — a seclusion that at such moments mounted to a poignant loneliness. Tactful suggestions had come to him from time to time that there was a common mode of relief from such a state. But he had what comfort there was in the reflection that

this normal escape from loneliness was prohibited as much by the meagerness of his income as by its incompatibility with the humorous detachment that he so prized. The soldier, the priest, and the scholar — he knew the ancient wisdom.

He had an amused outlook about him over the devastations that this escape had entailed upon some of his colleagues — the addition of domestic duties that were sometimes more than Omphalean in their indignity, the addition of domestic membership that promised crying distractions for years to come, the addition of expenses that superinduced pot-boiling and politics — the entrance of the personal equation destructive of scholarly calm and productive of the multiplex irrelevant motives that made futile so much of the life about him.

He knew, indeed, that he was open to the charge of selfishness, and he squirmed at the accusation. For he had the sentiment to be touched and won by the spectacle that took place courageously, now among his friends and now more remotely in some romance that fell under his eye, of a brave launching out into the double struggle. But he knew that the life that he proposed to himself was not to be one of ease, and that however poor a performer he was to be, it was, generically, to be performed the better alone.

As for the lyric aspect of the matter he had his reserves there too; and though he could smile at a touch of pedantry in his necessarily aloof point of view, he had the rational assurance of common sense that the aloof point of view was probably the saner — that the mad themselves were not the best

judges of madness. His own observations had made him suspect a certain sentimental falseness in the reputed attitude of all the world toward the concrete instance of the malady — certainly of the masculine part of it at all events. The instinct to hide the emotion, increasingly strong the richer the nature, rather suggested the older classic view of love as a sickness to be suffered in patience, a walking fever to be endured in as much silence as a resolute manliness could command — not a thing to be courted and fostered. And as he looked back upon a century that in its literature and in its current interpretation of life had lifted love to the highest place, he was struck with the spectacle of an almost unprecedented bankruptcy. The age that had apotheosized love was ending vulgarly as an age of divorce.

For all his smiles, and his perceptions, and his rationalizations, however, the sense that his youth had slipped by, often in futile experiences that he might better have missed altogether, and that he had missed this one experience, was a matter of underlying regret. However much a malady it might be, and however bitter its endurance, still it was too universally human to let him be normal in so wholly escaping it. His understanding of life was by so much the less complete, for though he had felt the vicarious passions of literature, he knew enough of the comparative paleness of literature even at its best to realize its insufficiency alone. And there was too, in his exemption, the lurking suspicion of something deficient in his own make-up, a suspicion more disconcerting than the mere escape from the external experience.

A LOVER OF THE CHAIR



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ONCE over the border of a stormy youth — the wrong border, alas, he was none the less inclined to say — he felt a curious serenity of spirit, which gave him for a brief searching birthday a disturbing qualm. It came over him suddenly that his present restful content was the sign of approaching age. He was concerned that he was not more concerned about certain losses that those storms had involved him in — certain shores that they had beaten him back from. They had driven him far enough about, sometimes into ports he had little pride in remembering. But he was out of it now, he told himself. His youth was over, he was as he was, and there was nothing for it but to take himself so. He could settle back upon an ironic survey of life and find a pleasant spice in his aloof contentment.

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doors, the hamlets high up the mountainsides — houses huddled like sheep around their shepherd churches — other hamlets still higher up on slopes that seemed inaccessible, and higher yet still other hamlets to the very edge of the summer snows — terraces of vines, terraces of short hay under the low branches of chestnut groves — deep shady vistas where the scythe and the bent mower forever reaped the scant harvest — wayside shrines that harbored here no broken-kneed Christs, but where the tender Virgin won an unremitting homage of simple flowers — stretches of old Roman roadway, and medieval ruins, and the swarming albergo, there at once side by side without clash, harmonious, in the presence of a life so simple and so unaltering that Virgil and St. Francis might have passed that way with them unshocked by change.

They had taken it all with the objective, welcoming eyes of travelers; but they had been moved, and the spell of Italy, drawing from their sense of the past and their vision of the present, had fallen upon them and taken them captive. For one of these travelers, at least, with his fears and his hopes, the pilgrimage was doubly endeared. He was exultant that the springs of his sensibilities were *not* wholly dried up; and he found himself dangerously making an attempt to adjust more leniently within him the momentous proportions of his reason and his heart.

So that now, when he saw himself ensnared in a new and deeper emotion, he was complexly but the more guarded against its mastery as he found himself the more inclined to indulge and test the new depths of his spontaneity. His conscious dualism

never left him, however — never so wholly that he could think of himself, after the manner of the world's beloved, as foregoing principles, ambitions, and native tastes as the price of attainment. And he kept, even in the moments of stress, enough of his objective humor to detect and smile back the unconscious egotisms of the lover in him.

He would have doubted, indeed, the probability of his being really in love had there not come upon him a vivid light that had never before illuminated his perceptions even in imagination, even in moments of transcendent emotion. Long ago he had had diverse experiences that had set him ruminating on his attachment to life. He had come near enough to death more than once in perils by sea and land to know that his physical clinging to life was a different thing from his conscious sense of attachment to it. As for his conscious attachment, his ultimate findings came to him, as he might have anticipated, not out of his reason but out of experience and an intuition sensitive to the subtle imagery of emotion.

One of the friends who had given to his college life the principal value that it had had for him, and who had shared with him a year of prodigal wanderings, had afterwards gone away in search of health, and then died. For five or six vital years they had been together, conscious together of what had been significant to each, filled with common tastes, often differing in opinion, but with a common vocabulary and a common understanding — phrases that meant philosophies, gestures that meant attitudes to life, smiles that summarized old experiences and old readings, a *rapport* that included the whole of the

structure that each in that period had built, in his consciousness, of life as he knew it.

In the bleak period that had followed the first departure, he had wandered through the empty rooms of that house of friendship desolately enough, yet forlornly comforted with the sense that still, though from a distance and with only a word now and then to break the loneliness, his habitation there was still shared. Hope kept those rooms habitable for lingering months. But when the end came, and the first hot grief had burnt to ashes, he knew that death had forever locked those doors. No one else could enter there, and the part they had built together, detail by detail, he himself could never live in again. New parts he could build, he knew, if he should have the heart, but the years of his old building were gone, and the completed structure of his life would forever be the less for the closing of those silent chambers.

It was the way of life, he knew. And in the desolate reflections that followed he knew that the conscious attachment to life lay, negatively, in an escape from an utter detachment, from isolation; and positively, in a sense that the intangible structure of life as he grasped it was shared with someone whose sympathy and understanding could confirm it, and rescue it from the haunting suspicion of nothingness.

He had secluded himself for a time, disheartened. To begin anew, to build again, was more than he could bring himself to at once. He had no wish for other friends. He found indeed that it was not in him to hunt them out, to choose and cultivate them.

His turn of mind, the quality of his appreciations, made a demand upon circumstances that if he have friendship it must grow organically from the process of life. Nothing else could produce what he understood by that term. He had no care for casual acquaintance. He had, however, the solace that comes nearest to friendship — he had books; and with them he spent his time for a year or two. And then he found, growing out of the new life he had made for himself, the beginning of new friendships. Living again had zest for him. This led him into franker and fuller associations, and these in turn to his curiously eventless romance.

The girl who fanned the sudden flame in him was, he knew at once, disconcertingly unlike the type of women who in lonely moments had peopled his fancy. They had been calm-mannered and friendly, vital but contained. They had not been clever, perhaps, but had grown up with ripe traditions into whose ways they had richly fallen. In their pleasant and wholesome benevolence they had been, above all, restful and serene, with a frank and tender humor, a refuge from life and from a troubled spirit.

The girl herself was wholly otherwise. He first met her in the drawing room of acquaintances whither he had gone to make a rare call. There was a silence when he entered, not embarrassed but intense, as though he had come upon a moment of strong feeling in which, though he took no part, his presence struck no discordant note. He was introduced to her then, simply; and in the high tension of her clear regard, in her elevation above the commonplace, he caught a wistful appeal in her inquir-

ing eyes. He did not know to what impassioned question he was responding or to what doctrine he was assenting. He only saw her there, very young and very slender and very erect, her head quivering high, her eyes burning with indignant wonder, her color very pure and heightened with emotion, and her thoughts lifted above the conventions of the moment. His blood leapt, without asking leave and without giving reasons.

He had no word with her then, except her look of baffled inquiry too impersonal he thought to have distinguished him; and yet in his unchallenged admission into the circle of her feelings he nourished a hopeful interpretation against the waiting smile of his later reflections. He put off impatiently the mocking intrusion of those reflections, and listened, when she had gone quietly and without apology from the room, to the explanations of his friends. She had been reading, they said with a lightness that had no flippancy, some of those modern writers who had discovered that life was hard, and harder for some than for others. And she had gone out to see for herself. What she had looked for had not been hard to find, real and heart-rending. At the end of her endurance she had come upon a pitiful case of ejection, squalid household goods crying their shame at the curbstone, a drunken father, a sad, starved mother nursing a baby at her flat breast, and half-clad, dirty children shivering about her. It was a typical case, they said, as they sat in the comfortable drawing room before the blazing fire; and they looked at each other wretchedly and in silence, moved by the pure young sympathies of the girl, her

generous indignation, the revival of old feelings and old problems, and the reminder of old wounds that had never healed.

He went away troubled, his quickened pulse at the thought of the clear generous eyes of the girl rebuked by the unselfish wistfulness of her emotion. His mind moved along sudden unwonted paths. Bright visions flashed out upon him. But he told himself pityingly that he was too old. He had struggled with the horror of that experience that had now so suddenly blighted the joy of her normal girlhood, and he had come out of the struggle, not on the side of youth and hope and ardor and generosity, and of confidence that he could take the world in his two eager hands and shape it anew in some less hateful mold. He had come out, alas, on the side of middle age, less hopeful, less eager, in the measure of his despair; and now as he looked back on the years since his Utopia had faded for him, he knew that in the vision of ardent youth, with the sight of the world's misery before its eyes, he must be accounted by so much the less generous. He was spending his years among books, in the pleasant warmth of his study, shut off from the sight of suffering in the elegant pursuit of learning, or looking at it in strange foreign cities, in Italian countrysides, in gaunt fishing villages on desolate French coasts, with the curious, objective, aloof, picture-hunting eyes of the traveler. With the friends he had left but now he had talked of this problem, trying against the incessant pressure of the age to keep clear the point of view that he had gained. He knew that whatever the evils of life,

not sympathy alone could better them; that learning and thought must have their silent place in the regenerative forces that should bring about a better future. And he had committed himself to the latter forces.

He went away from his friends glooming among his own reflections. His humor deserted him. The little personal charities that he had sneakingly maintained against the wisdom of his organizing age suddenly looked paltry and feeble in the face of that sweeping grasp which the young hopes of the new generation seemed to have attained. They rose up and mocked him. And when at the door of his own chambers he passed the humble figure of an old pensioner of his, he strode in without a smile of recognition and slammed the door. He was down with the malady.

Seated by his window he looked afresh at the problem from the point of view he had won in his old wrestling with it. Surely for that less cruel future toward which the present was aiming there must be saved what good things had been accumulated in the past; old traditions must go on, the love of art, the love of books, the love of wisdom; the human chain must remain unbroken; the torch must be kept alight and handed on.

How trite it all sounded! To what feeble phrases, now suddenly, he was reduced, as he came again to view the problem from the ardent angle of youth and generosity, and illusion, and hope! He saw it all anew out of the dreaming eyes of girlhood — and it struck him how drab and wintry were the colors of his own vision. His own vision assumed all at once

a dwindling remoteness. It lacked the warm, heartening touch of immediacy, the quickening contact of life. He seemed to be trying, from aloof, and with averted eyes, to do what only a direct vision and courageous bodily presence could hope to do. And he saw embodied in this girl the spirit of a new age, with eyes open, with quick sympathy, touching the wound with its own hands, devoting *itself* to the healing service. Every instinct in him tugged at his assent to this call of life.

He sat on in his window, ruminating in gloomy rebellion. Why he should thus twist the fancies that a fair face had set free in him into a grotesque picture of despair he had not, for the hour, the humor even to question. It was indeed a rebellion against growing up, a crying out against the years, an old ember of his youth that had not gone out, glowing through the ashes it had been buried among. But he had lost his detachment, his perspective, his humor; and the particular circumstance of the moment absorbed and embodied the universal protest — keen in him, for he loved the human aspects of life — against the hardening changes of maturity.

He went on savagely reflecting. He knew the intransigence of youth, and the hardness of its generosity. And besides she was a woman. There came into his mind a sally of an old humanist — La Bruyère — which he knew to be true to his own observation — that women cared nothing for the past. They did care nothing for it — nothing for the slow structure of accumulating wisdom built upon the experience of peoples and ages that were gone. There were almost no women historians, al-

most no women philosophers, almost no women humanists, though there were women poets and women novelists in profusion, and a growing body of women scientists, business women, and soon perhaps of politicians. Their concern was with the present and the immediate and the expedient. Their sensitive sympathies, touched quickly with the present reality, did much to mollify and humanize and warm a life left cold by the remoter rational dreams of men.

He laughed aloud, mirthlessly, at the fine sweep of his generalization. But it seemed to him true, true in the large, though he saw in the situation about him that many men were throwing over their own for the feminine standard, were giving up their concern for the large vision of the past, and were substituting in human affairs the criterion of spontaneous sympathy, for that of a wisdom broadly founded on the most significant of human experience.

He rose and strode across the room. With the change of position there came into his mind the picture of the old man who had been hanging about the entry when he had come in. The pathos of that patient figure, and the recollection that he had passed him by without a word or a glance, smote him and brought moisture to his eyes. A sudden sympathy, such as he had never felt even when he had been most kind, suffused him, and snatching his hat and coat he went out to look for the old pensioner. The empty passage filled him with remorse, and sent him off to the poor rooms where the aged man lived. Clearly he was down with the malady.

The relief of action gave a new turn to his inner conflict. In the days that followed, a surging hope

sang in his heart, and in leisure hours sent him wandering away from the populous streets to the bare wintry stretches of the park. Now for the first time in years he felt the thrill of kinship with the natural things that he had latterly shut himself away from. His eyes found a sudden pleasure in the intricate pattern of the twigs against the sky. The pale purity of the blue background caught a response in him that enriched the pleasure of his present perceptions with a resurgence of his childhood's love of color. He heard the thin minor pipe of a bird's winter song high up among the branches. Without his knowing why at first, nature was become thrillingly vital. Then he knew with a kind of shame that it was because of an absurd illusion. He seemed to be sharing his perceptions — hearing through other ears, seeing through other eyes, silently voluble the while to an invisible companion at his side in unutterable communion of the primal intuitions that lay at the bottom of his consciousness — colors, and sounds, and forms, and odors, the feel of the breeze on his cheek, of vigor in his blood, of ardor in his spirit, of beauty in external things, and of inexpressible emotions.

It was the old and endeared story of his friendship, but with this difference — that it was no sharing of the conscious structure of the part of life builded together and lived in common, but the sudden mystic hope, the semblance, the illusion, he could not have said, of sharing in that region from whose vague depths surged up the quickening intuitions that are the essence of life itself. His elemental perceptions brightened vividly, visibly, with

the sense of that response. He knew now in the aloof and ironic half of his consciousness the meaning of what the vulgar and the cultivated alike were reduced to calling love at first sight. There were moments when he felt ashamed, now that he was face to face with that part of his common humanity which he had so long suppressed. Yet there it was. And if it had come to him suddenly, lovers obviously needed no long experience in common; they had all the mystery of life in common. They might indeed add friendship when the fresh colors of the illusion had dulled, but in itself love was other than friendship.

He knew now the meaning of the pregnant silence of lovers—the simple language of proximity—for the substance of their communion was beyond the reach of words. It was a commonplace to observe that men did not fall in love with cleverness, with virtue, with taste, with ability, with any of the cultivated qualities, though these might indeed comfort the conscience of the pure passion. It was the temperament, the barbaric and unsubdued nature, flaming beneath and through the character, that set the heart astir with thrilling illusions. Cleopatra, not Hypatia, had made the world's great love story.

As he saw her again and again he was charmed with the accession of all the radiant, inexpressive qualities that he had created for her in his hours of dreaming. She was very young, scarcely twenty, but in trying to place her by recollecting his own state of mind at twenty he saw that he had no clue to her. She was older than he had been, and though she had less knowledge and less experience to build



upon, her simplicity was thus the less far-reaching. It was piquant, and baffling, and competent. She took his presence with frank kindliness, talked with him without self-consciousness, and appealed from her ignorance to his knowledge with an open sincerity that smote him with the consciousness of his age. None the less it was captivating, not to his vanity, but to his love of the undisguised nature of her. She had what was rare in his experience of women — a way of saying *yes* and *no* firmly and quickly, with her mind on the subject, as though there were no impression to be made on the hearer, no personal matter lurking in the rear in danger of compromise. Her manner to him was open and ardent with her own vitality, but without a touch of the personal that he had come to think of as the distinguishing feminine trait.

She was, he came to believe, of the new order — firm of tread, of strong supple hands, and with a mind turned outward. She spoke recurrently, when they met again and again, of the problem that her awakening had put to her so poignantly. And in the vivid strength of his sympathetic appreciation of her, his heart failed him. He would have had her so little otherwise. Her youth, her ardor, her hot indignation, the generous reaction of her enlarging spirit in its first hard contact with an inveterate world, were too inherently right. Even from his own older point of view the alternative, embodied in the young women about them too absorbed in pleasure to have felt the pathos of life outside themselves, seemed to him shallow and ignoble. He had no wish to dull the fine keenness of her Utopian dreams with

his own sense of the hopelessness of her hope. If she should come some day to an understanding of his vision, it must be won by way of the path she had already started out upon; and knowing the sanctions of the time, and remembering the slow struggle of his own solution, and realizing that she was a woman, he despaired again. His heart was still entangled with his brain.

He spun for her, on the web of his imagination, a state of mind serenely impersonal, objective, and he dared not trespass upon it with his own more intimate dream. With a humor that did little to soften the bitterness of his position he saw the touch of the ridiculous in his reversal of traditional relations — that it was he whose attitude was wholly personal and she who was aloof among larger concerns. It was no relief to realize that it was he who was mature and she a girl hardly on the threshold of womanhood.

He held his peace, therefore, and lent himself to her service with an objective friendliness that he despaired of altering. He saw himself with a sardonic smile, the aloof and ironic observer of men, dangling forlornly and helplessly after a girl, no differently from other poor mortals with no irony in their souls, and no philosophy in their outlook upon life. But the resolve to speak and put an end to his distraction, formed away from his sight of her, melted before the regard of her frank eyes when they met again. She was too young, and too simple, and too generous. He could not trouble with his passion the serenity of her maidenly spirit.

With despairing clearness he saw that all the

qualities on which he was wont to base his own self-regard — good sense, insight, understanding — added nothing to his intrinsic worthiness as a lover. In a sudden accession of humility he felt a kind of desecration in the thought that love should first breathe upon her unconscious youth from his own disillusioned lips. He could have chosen for her some radiant youth whose lineaments, he realized with a whimsical smile, were drawn from his own picture of herself.

One day, when he found with forlorn amusement how thick the sheaf of verses had grown in which he had relieved the enforced silence of his feelings, he admitted the lover in himself to be typical, undisguised, and to the top of the bent. But when he looked forward he saw no turning in the long lane ahead. He felt the bitter pain of his malady. In time it grew intolerable, and at last drove him to action.

He inscribed in the fly-leaf of a book he had promised her the fair copy of some verses he had written. They pleaded his cause from that fantastic elevation to which his over-sensitive interpretations had lifted it; and if after all they were prose, they had a touch of the dignity into which he had withdrawn to meet the blow which he knew must follow.

Upon the top of this high wooded hill
The temple we have builded stands serene,
Stately and fair, with sunlit colonnades
That open out for us on all the world.

And you would linger, thus we differ so,
Though friends no less, within the colonnades,

Where you and I, though we together walk
Hand fast in hand and murmuring each to each,
Must needs look outward; and the sunlit world,
Lying before us, many-colored, fair,
Or sometimes crying in its misery,
Is with us in this temple we have wrought.

Do you not see, dear, that we can not have
Our temple, though we builded it ourselves,
Without an inner portal which will lead —
Ah, can it be you fear? — through twilight aisles
To chapeled recesses, to mystic crypts,
Down undreamed passages to tapered shrines —
Perhaps with one shrine yet unguessed, whose god —
Would it be only Friendship? Ah, who knows?

He awaited with hot and cold blood the time when he should see her again, anticipating in her first glance the decision that he had precipitated. He looked at himself with baffled scorn. He had seen a good deal of the world, climbed its mountains, braved its seas, endured good fortune and bad, and had come back, to a life of seclusion indeed, but with toughened fibers and a mind above the foibles of ease-softened men, to sit aloof and understand that life that had proved so empty. And here was he, humbled to the common level, weaker than the lover of the ball room, trembling lest he fail to win a boon at the hands of a young girl, a personal boon — he who had thought to live above the petty and the personal — and a boon that would commit him to the petty and the personal for all his time to come. He scorned himself hotly — and he trembled for his fate.

When it came it came simply. Her steady eyes met his, fearlessly, tenderly. Without the ability to read there his sentence he saw swept away all the tangled cobwebs of his fantastic weaving. He had wrought masculinely, grotesquely; he had built in a realm of unreality. And now at once as they faced one another they were simply two — a man and a woman. In that timeless moment his love grew lucid and infinitely tender. He saw in her clear and calm eyes the pure and natural reality of their human relation, and her woman's competence to deal with her woman's crisis. The moment was simpler and more natural for her than for him. He felt very young in the presence of her immemorial womanhood.

Then in the tremulous tension of her mouth, in her distressed brow, in the luminous promise of tears in her eyes, he read the simple sincerity of her understanding and the pain of her denial. The barriers of opinion that had troubled him, the attitude to life, all the cultivated qualities of brain and heart were not of the situation. These were matters of friendship, and she was still his friend. Her denial came from deeper sources.

He had not known till then the intensity of his longing. The days and weeks of hot grief that followed were easier to bear than the later time of grey and empty indifference when life had faded and dulled, when he saw colors and lost their poignant appeal, when he heard melodies and cared nothing for their sweetness, and when old odors brought but the sense of waste in the tender memories that they

recalled. All the native intuitions and perceptions had gathered themselves for a supreme moment, and then, baffled and rejected, had sunk back withered and inert.

When his interests began in time to revive he met them shamefacedly and fought them back. He clung desperately to his misery. Then one day he found himself smiling down at himself from his aloof conning tower. With that he knew that he was convalescent, and hungry again for life.

He had no poignant regrets. Inevitably there were moments of loneliness, when his memory conjured up old dreams. But he could smile at the idyllic inconsistency even of these dreams, knowing that only as dreams could they have left his life as happy as it was. For his present life suited the temper of his spirit. He rejoiced in its seclusion, in its leisure, in the dignity of a position that gave him entry to all sorts of men and excused him from the need to go among them. Echoes of reproach, especially from feminine sources, that his way of life was wholly selfish, reached him from time to time, and amused him. At least he had done his best. The memory of old fears lest he miss some part of the typical life of men came back to him only to strengthen his philosophic acceptance of his own limitations. He saw these limitations now more clearly, and took himself as he was. Besides, he had had his romance.

Looking backwards he reasoned that he had overlaid the spontaneous and natural elements of his temperament too deeply to strike, in some one else,

the answering spark of love. Love was a matter of temperament, of native, not acquired qualities.

It was only later, when he fell again happily in love, that he ceased to generalize about the vagaries of this stirring and masterful passion.

II

CHAIR AND SADDLE

IN the stretch that followed the rebellion of his early thirties he developed into a kind of mature youthfulness that seemed, to his grim amusement, to dodge awkwardly between the privileges of youth and the authority of age. His opinions were no longer smiled at tolerantly as the promising exuberance of young blood, nor listened to seriously as the accumulation of experience.

Certain friends of his boyhood whom he saw now and again seemed to have done better. They gave him the impression of having definitely grown up. They were irritating in the effect they produced of terrible impressiveness, as though they had taken better advantage of their time and got on to a definite maturity. They had set chins and firm mouths of the slightly hard American kind; they spoke incisively, without doubts and without shading; and they were listened to. For the most part they were in business, or in the professions that with us in America are the adjuncts of business. But occasionally some of them, or of their kind, had drifted into the more disinterested walks, and proved there to their own satisfaction and the general applause that wherever the red-blooded man got into the saddle the ambling nag underneath woke up and began a smart canter.

He found his own nag, indeed, going at such a gait under him that he began to doubt whether he could keep his seat. And when he snatched fearful glances about him for a reasonably safe place to alight, he saw nothing but inhospitable doors closed to him. He perceived promptly enough that the difficulty lay in himself; his pace damned him. One door, however, he did try, without discarding his mount. It looked more inviting than any other he could see. But after a good deal of knocking he met with courteous refusals no less positive than those he had foreseen elsewhere. It was the door of the publishers; he had begun to write.

The stuff he wrote bore plainly the stamp of futility; he dealt with what he was interested in and treated it from his own point of view. His interest was the eternal one, indeed, in human nature; but his point of view was the obsolete one that the French describe in the term *moral* — the disinterested play of the discursive reason in the field of life and letters. And he took it seriously. He had humor, it is true, but even his humor he took a little sadly, as befitted the human plight. It was with a wry smile, therefore, that he saw his efforts complained of as not sufficiently serious for publication.

His colleagues about him wrote and were published, but they wrote in a more current vein, sentimentally, or scientifically, or in the interest of some propaganda or current enthusiasm. He took his grievance, however, without a sour face, and worked on undiscouraged, putting the substance of his ideas into brief essays condensed with the bitter pain of

concentration. There were passages that he believed to have attained to some perfection of expression. He could smile, indeed, at his own vanity, and not infrequently did, but it was disconcerting to have his labors smiled at by others. One frank editor spoke of them as the *dilletante play of an otiose fancy*. He cherished this comment grimly. It had been called forth by his animadversion that the significance of history lay in its interpretation. He collated this with the complaint of another editor that he had *used the reason where the reason had no place*. His point on this occasion had been that the significance of poetry lay in the moving expression of its *idea*.

There was private amusement to be had out of all this, and in the serenity of his philosophic moments he had the humor to suck enjoyment from it. But he was human enough in very virtue of the humane quality of his interests to long, at other and frequenter moments, for a little larger group to share his appreciation with, and take a little of the forlornness out of his fun.

This forlornness became particularly acute one afternoon when he found himself forced to provide himself with new storage room for an intolerable heap of post-worn manuscripts that lay on his hands. In a collective survey he amused himself with the infinite variations of courtesy — ironic in the damning fact of print — that were possible to notices of rejection. And on the heels of this, in a hurried half-hour's conversation, he was plunged into another variety of condemnation, and given to see with fine explicitness the ultimate reason for his obscurity.

While he was dustily busy with this expanding heap of manuscripts, he was caught by one of his red-blooded colleagues, who had come in upon him on half-official matters. His visitor was one who had got on, one who sat the canter easily and touched it up with spur and crop. He rode well and erect and with a fine confidence; the glow of speed was in his eye. Certainly he was a more pleasing spectacle than the riders of the older school.

He was a modern anti-intellectualist in his avowed philosophy and took his attitude quite seriously and not a little dogmatically — a reasoner of the type that so promptly accrued to M. Bergson's following. His discipleship was superficial, perhaps, but he had enough of that philosopher's convincing logic to disconcert those of his antagonists who stuck to a belief in the reason.

From the aloof quiet of his library, where our friend spent enough of his days to keep his judgments unroiled, this personage had seemed to him eminently unimportant. But there was a sense connected with some of his current reflections in which *unimportant* was a very hard word to pronounce. For the man was of the kind that inevitably won suffrage and built upon suffrage. And his particular combination of politics and anti-intellectualism was growing common and desperately effective.

These reflections were sufficiently irrelevant at the moment, and only won pertinence by the accident of a discussion that the two men, so polar in their inner opposition, fell into on another topic. The pile of rejected manuscripts was lying openly confessional on the table before them, and shrank a bit,

in the sensitive person of their author, before the successful presence that now confronted it. For this red-blooded modern was the author of three widely read books, and had become what in the current tongue is called an "authority" on social questions.

Our friend himself was not unfound on that score, and had indeed been reading the rejection of an article mildly social when the other entered. It had been so unusual in its terms, this rejection, and so caustic in its revelation of the editor's bitter soul, that he took now a kind of ironic joy in handing it over to his visitor with a wave of his hand toward the rejected remains on the table.

The moment he withdrew his fingers he repented. For the other, though he had wit enough, had little of that self-directed humor that is the mother of urbanity among equals. His dogmatic and undoubting temper served him well among those who discover seriousness only in solemnity — college officials, the world of women's clubs, and the more intelligent philistines — and it was among them that he had won his place as a man of ideas. But for friendly talk upon serious subjects he had none of the penetrating frankness, the experimental courage, the amused self-doubt, that make an adventure of conversation. Our friend, therefore, watched the perusal with a touch of compunction. He was uncertain how it would be taken.

"We publish what will go," the editor had said, "and your stuff won't go. It is detached, disinterested. You lack what is known as 'life'. You don't content yourself with the immediate play of appear-

ances — of things. Your ideas are general; they are *ideas*; you say what is true of a number of cases instead of what is true of a single case — of what is unique. You lack edge. You ought to catch the vivid drift of a lock of hair across a fair brow; and what you do is to catch the invisible turn of mind of a whole section of mankind. You try to write for people who are educated, people who think alike even when they disagree, who know an idea when they see one, and aren't pared down to the senses God gave them to go to the movies with. And such people no longer exist.

"You see evils, and you blame the readers for them; what we want is to blame someone else. You have an idea that the people in their normal character — temper, intelligence, and morals — determine the quality of their own social conditions, and that whatever revolution may come they drift back, after it, to the old level, through the push of those same normal forces. We want to spread the idea that by a burst of energy a device can be got into operation that will take the place of personal virtue and intelligence. You want to make people mistrust their normal selves; we want to make them trust their normal selves. . . ."

When his visitor looked up our friend was wincing under the recollection of raw and flattering exaggerations in certain phrases of the letter. He need not. The face that looked at him was full of complacent sympathy.

"He is pretty hard on you."

"Bitterly," our friend returned.

"You are a conservative, I take it."

"No, a radical."

"But these things he says . . ."

"My radicalism is what he objects to."

"I'm afraid I don't understand." There was a touch of asperity in the voice now.

"You are right and I am wrong," his host returned. "I was playing with the idea. My point was simply that ideas lie at the root of all our voluntary changes, and as I was in search of ideas I called myself a radical — ideas, of course, in the sense of those guiding principles and opinions that determine actions."

His visitor pondered for a moment, the impatience not quite gone from the finger tips that tapped the arm of his chair. He was a Liberal of the current school, and our friend found, in the none too urbane discussion which followed, something of the serious amusement with which he normally looked upon certain of the Liberal paradoxes.

"Conservative, though, in the ordinary sense?" his guest asked at last.

"I imagine; though sometimes when I look around I wonder what I want to conserve."

"The authority of the few, I judge."

"If I could select my few," our friend smiled.

"But yes, that in principle."

"You hold against the majority opinion."

"As such, yes. The point is, of course, the very old commonplace that the idea ought to be judged on its own."

The subject was broached, and our friend drew himself together in response to an indefinable loingirding on the part of his guest.

"Aren't you describing," the latter began — "aren't you describing the conditions that made for this?" And his hand rested on the pile of rejected manuscripts.

"Ah, there they are," our friend smiled wryly.

"I don't so much mean," hastened his interlocutor, "that you should write what the people want — that you should be a 'trimmer'. What I mean is that a philosopher of the few can expect to find his readers limited."

"I wish I could make them more," his host returned heartily. "You have managed it. I won't ask for advice, for I suppose I am like others and would go on in my old way in spite of it. But the idea would be — ?"

"To have another philosophy."

"Of the many?"

"Yes."

The distinction between that and trimming was at first obscure, and indeed it left the Liberal a little uncomfortable.

"You must *have* the philosophy, of course," he went on. "There is the difference. For my own part I think that the time has past when the finest minds aim at distinction. Rather they prize what is common to all humanity, and prefer to merge their own with the universal mind and will of the race."

Our friend made no answer. His thoughts went for a moment to the obscurity of those few at whom the remark seemed to be aimed, and at the eminence of those who caught the general ear. He wondered whether, for these latter, independent thinking did

appear to be only a bid for distinction — whether perhaps, in the habit of building upon suffrage, they had not lost the drive and compulsion of an individual opinion.

"My trouble is," he resumed at last, "that I find it hard to know what you mean. I don't know how to think except with my own mind. And when I find that differing from the popular one — why, I side with myself. It's an old-fashioned egotism, but I don't see how I can do anything else."

"You are an intellectual," the other returned, "— you don't mind my saying it? — and I imagine that the day of the intellectuals has passed. I find myself a little abrupt, but we started by explaining that heap of manuscripts. You say that they don't go. And I should say that perhaps the reason is that, so to speak, the bottom has fallen out of intellectualism. You trust to your reason, you intellectuals, and yet — Shall we go into this?"

"By all means."

"Well, then, at the bottom is the fact that the reason has no solid criteria, nothing stable to build upon, nothing indisputable except — I speak impersonally — the self-complacency of an elect that have been self-elected. And now that our modern philosophy has shown how fluid and misty and wilful the premises of your reason are, there is a kind of sense abroad that the intellectuals have rather imposed on humanity in the past. The movement of Liberalism has been a steady revolt against self-constituted authority — priest, autocrat, tyrant, and now the intellectuals — arbiters of all kinds who set themselves up as umpires of actions or ideas or tastes."

An ironic retort clamored for release. Our friend compromised.

"My own difficulty," he said, "when I get to that stage of skepticism, is that there seems to be no warrant for any ideas at all."

"That is it," the other assented.

"But you Liberals — just now you seem to be full of ideas. You quite go in for regulation, restriction, and the control of the individual."

"It is true, of course," the other returned, "but if there is no warrant for ideas as such, it is our belief that the ideas that go ought to be selected by those who are going to be affected by them."

"Everyone for himself?"

"That would be anarchy. No — on the whole and in the large."

"By majority vote, then."

"Yes. On the belief that the majority opinion is the wisest and justest obtainable."

Our troubled friend pondered for a moment over his guest's thus begging the question. To postulate the majority opinion should have been the last word; to bring in "justice" and "wisdom" was to bring in ideas. But he gave over the point as too subtle for their present driving manner. He went on to another point that troubled him.

"Majority opinion — you use the phrase. But for my own part, when I try to follow that conception down to the roots, and get rid, as you have done just now, of all individual opinion and all new ideas that crop up in individual minds, all that I find is just what is — *what is*. What is, at any moment, is the expression of the aggregate opinion, the bal-

ance of all the extant motives. For anyone to try to change the situation would be to try to inject an idea into the balance — and that is against the theory. The only thing to do would be to let things drift.”

“Opinions, of course, have to begin somewhere,” the other answered. “The Liberal point is, naturally, that they should be made over into majority opinion by general explanation and persuasion. Aren’t you a little over-subtle?”

Our friend smiled. It was subtlety or nothing. With a sigh he saw fate descending upon him. The other, with his fine flow, and the touch of tolerance which his red blood gave him the lordly right to, would in a moment ride off in triumph. Nothing could better the fine manner, but it refined even upon itself with the open generosity with which it smiled and mollified its rebuke. What wonder its owner won suffrage! Our friend squirmed with the sense of his own insignificance.

“My point,” he went on, none the less, with a desperate pride, “is that for the moment we are both of us getting at the bottom, and the bottom is always a little elusive. For my part I wanted to get at two things. And now you must smile, or what I say will be intolerable. These manuscripts of mine — to tell the truth I should like to see my ideas taken up and become majority opinion. I have my vanity, you see. That puts them, philosophically, on all fours with a Liberal opinion, doesn’t it, before the Liberal opinion gets majority support?”

The other waited with a kindly smile.

“We are all, I imagine,” our friend went on,

"tarred with the same stick — tainted with intellectualism. Even you use your reason to persuade us that reason is fustian; and but a moment since you spoke of making over individual opinion into majority opinion by general explanation and persuasion. And in your politics you propound theories of wisdom and justice in majorities that seem to some of us the most airy and brain-spun of pure ideas. We are all of us condemned to intellectualism so long as we talk, and plan, and keep a pride in our human capacity to affect our own fate. And it is you Liberals who have the greatest faith in that capacity.

"Those are some of the reasons why some of us hold back from what in many ways can't help having a strong appeal to us. For my own part I like your Liberal hopes even when I can't hope with you. But your theories often, as in this case, go too much against even your inner beliefs and outer practices to win our sympathy. Like you we must go on saying what we think. I am afraid that my heap of stuff must go on piling up. And really what else is there for it?"

The other sat for a moment, pondering the little problem that so troubled his host.

"The trouble lies in your ideas," he said at last. "As your harsh editor writes, they won't do. You are conservative; and the day of conservatism is past. As for us, we have faced about. We are looking at the future. And then, too, it is your attitude. Where you differ from the Liberals is in this — that you care more for your ideas than you do for humanity."

"And yet," our friend mused, "it is you who wish to change humanity according to your ideas, and we who wish to preserve what humanity has established."

They hung upon that for a moment. There was a disconcerting point to it.

"It is a matter of sympathy — sympathy for the human thing," his visitor concluded, ignoring the pause. "The whole Liberal effort, often bungling I dare say, is aimed at the opening up of more and more of the vital sources of this humanity. Look at it now, nine tenths of it suppressed, mute, going to waste, humanly speaking, like immemorial ants. I have turned over a stone on a lonely mountain peak in the Rockies, and watched the endless conservatism of a life there that has not changed from the beginning, and will not change, slaves and rulers alike, to a disheartening eternity. And when I have looked back at humanity again, and seen so much of the dull repetition of that endless spectacle under the stone, I have seen too that the human thing is to get away from that — to change, to progress, and to give the least of them some share in the forces of change. That is what I mean by democracy. If you are not in sympathy with that movement —" he smiled kindly and waved his hand toward the heap on the table — "I'm afraid you will go on building your sad monument here. For we are likely to be permanent; in a democracy might and authority are on the same side."

He left, and left our friend in the itching discomfort of unvented opinion. "To give to the least of them some share in the forces of change!" Change

in what direction, and with what aim? And in that question was involved the problem that this modern was so scornful about through his philosophical vent. Clearly the terrible thing about him and his Liberal partisans was their extreme intellectualism through their political vent. They would mold life over, at once, and with a stroke of the pen.

Still he knew that there was a case for these men of action — a case as good as his own. He had the ambiguous blessing of imagination and could see himself, in the interims of his militant moods, from their point of view. They were the masters of the world, and if they had the strut and swagger of conquerors, who could blame them, or blame them the touch of contempt, kindly or tolerant, but still contempt, with which they must look down on the aenemic scholar bending over his midnight treatise, feet cold and head hot, wrestling with subtle brain-spun distinctions twixt tweedledum and tweedledee that the gross world could never see, or seeing could never have the patience or the care to act upon?

He had no contempt of his own, however, for his own kind. Rather he knew that each was necessary, each complementing the other. It was a game, one of the eternal conflicts, and he took it so, not flip-pantly, but with the decent good humor that should keep bitterness out of the calculation. He saw, too, that if the men of action so often had the better of it in the way of action, the others as often had the better of it in the way of ideas; and having chosen his side he could have nothing to complain of. He played the game hard, therefore, no doubt often puffing and blowing in the heat of hard-fought points,

but willing in the end to acknowledge the fight worth while and his opponent the thing that made it so.

He sat musing after his guest's departure, stirred to his reflections by the sense that it was such irritations as he had just been chafing under that roused him to react. For he was tingling pleasantly with the consciousness that there was still something more to be said about ideas and Liberalism.

III

A LIBERAL EXPERIENCE

THE point of this adventure was in the peculiarly tentative turn of it. The adventurer himself, in the midst of American life where so many masculine things have gone overboard, had maintained toward practical affairs a very masculine habit of disinterested observation and reflection. He paid a high price for the indulgence. He forfeited the approval of the feminine part of the local world he lived in, and with us that comes to a very swinging majority. The older-fashioned among them felt the ancient, subtle resentment at his aloofness, *qua* aloofness, and the newer-fashioned resented his thoughtfulness for not being immediate, and ardent, and propagandist.

The end of it was that he came back after his adventure to a very lively and very much heated public opinion. The adventure itself was over and done before the war began in 1914, and the local flare would probably have gone out as rapidly as such flares do if the war itself had not intervened to give a peculiar edge to his speculations. By a slender tenure he held a post that was half public in its nature, and this public exposure laid him open to what followed. What did follow was a good deal of newspaper publicity, and a delegation.

He dealt with the delegation patiently, a little amusedly. It was in the nature of his temper that he could not answer questions in monosyllables, and the delegation wanted monosyllabic answers. They wanted to know specifically whether he believed in democracy. His reply was not evasive, but it was laborious and complex, and probably seemed evasive to their impatience.

What he tried to make them see, and what seemed so hard for them to see, was that since we were already a democracy the great thing was to maintain a constant and goading criticism of it. To them criticism meant simple hostility. They did not quite grasp his interest in the *idea*, or fathom his sense that to question the idea at every point was the only mode of keeping it vital. His answer that it was not the critical but the uncritical who were the threat to democracy, left them a little hostile. In the end their blunt question whether if he could he would overthrow democracy tomorrow brought out his surprised and evidently sincere, "No." They left him then. They were puzzled, a little angry. They seemed to have been robbed of the ground they were standing on.

The adventure itself took place not in America at all. A half-pay sabbatical had offered him a long-hoped-for year of leisure, and he had elected to spend it abroad. He wanted certain things that he could get nowhere else — contact again with old and vivid associations, and access to Paris, to the Alps, and to Italy. Above all he wanted the perspective of America that nothing but detachment

could give. Not inauspiciously he settled upon London.

Before he had left a conscientious acquaintance had intimated to him with tact that his going was a piece of self-indulgence not so altruistic as the world was latterly demanding of its best spirits — that the old ideal of self-improvement was giving way before the newer one of service.

The good will, the large, vague, myopic aspiration that peered out of the earnest, solemn face before him made it impossible to smile. Our friend kept silence, waiting for other bolts from that quiver. They came, one after another, with the persuasive sincerity that made it hard to treat them humanly as they deserved. If these men could only laugh! But they had no laughter in them. Clearly they had taken too seriously the substitution of service for self-improvement.

He knew that the best Liberals had no belief in such clap-trap, however sincerely it came from the mouths of the feeble; but he found himself in this quandary as to Liberalism even at its best — that whatever the beauty of Liberal ideals they were calculated to put increasing power into the hands of people like the little man before him, and of people who found such logic plausible.

It was this latter perception, flashed on him on the eve of his going away, that gave a bent to his observations and reflections abroad — the perception that Liberalism had no adequate criticism in America. There was plenty of opposition, it was true, but he knew that for the most part it was merely *illiberal* opposition — the opposition of the

dog with a bone to the dog with none. That antagonism threw his sympathies so far to the side of Mother Hubbard's poor beast, that if he could have seen no third way out he would have gone over heart and soul to the Liberals themselves. He thought that he did see a third way out, however, though to get to it now would be too blind a leap in the dark. So he set himself, once off the ground of his responsibilities, to groping toward it.

He settled in London in the pleasant way they have there that goes by the name of "lodgings." It took, indeed, some courage for our friend to brave it alone, for the peculiar delight of lodgings begins when good comrades go it together, and increases with the number of available acquaintances to be invited in at will. But he began it, and for a time the revival of old impressions kept him company enough.

"London!" he wrote back at the end of his first week. "The thing is that you feel at home here. You've been taking it in from the time you first wept over *Oliver Twist* and *Little Nell*. How universal and maudlin and sincere those insincerities of Dickens were; they caught us all where we lived.

"Nothing amazes you. That is the great impression that London revisited makes. You expect everything, and everything turns out as you expected — the softening grime of the London air, the lumbering busses, St. Paul's and the river, the faces that Phiz stamped on your brain years ago and you called impossible, shabby-genteel ghosts out of Thackeray, intricate streets, and names that are names of romance clinging here to dingy reality. . . ."

After the pleasant restlessness of his first few weeks had given way to an heroic treatment of indulgence, and he had settled into a quieter content with afternoon divings into the maelstrom, his reflections and his readings began to draw in upon the special object he had set himself in pursuit of. There were moments in these devious excursions into the darker corners of the town when he was tempted in rebellion to throw over the curious scrutiny of political ideas and to rest passionately on any party that would undertake, with pity and courage, to strike a blow for the relief of the misery of the poor. So much was he touched by two or three instances of degradation in poverty that came home to his definite knowledge, and by at least one moving case where a timely rescue had justified the hopes that had prompted it, that he felt again the ardor of his old-time dreams. He saw again from the point of view of those who looked with intolerant impatience upon those who sat aloof and spun theories. His own years of secluded and snug reflection smote him. All this reversion was tentative, appreciative, rather than active. He realized again how men might abandon themselves to those fervors, though he was, no doubt, far from such abandonment himself.

It was in a mood of this kind that he went one day to hear a Liberal speaker who promised to deal frankly with the problem. The plea was half given over to touching pictures of wretchedness. If the speaker had stopped at that he would have done well. The difficulty was that he could not stop at that. To stop at that was to stop at the present, to rouse

the sympathies of the men and women in front of him, and send them at most on separate errands of kindness to the unfortunates whose sufferings they could reach. But the speaker was not looking to immediate acts of charity and kindness. He was looking into the future. He was looking to such a control of affairs as would prevent forever the conditions he found so intolerable. He wanted those men and women whose sympathies he had stirred to co-operate with him in a scheme of control. It was nobly and generously done. But it cured our friend of his moment of weakness. It was patent at once that the only grasp the speaker could have on the future was the despised one of the aloof theorists themselves. He had nothing to offer but an idea. One of his auditors went away knowing, as he had never quite ceased to know, that aside from the duty of personal kindliness, the problem was to lay hands on the right *idea* and make it prevail.

He saw, indeed, how it was possible to be too aloof and to sit and spin ideas in cold words out of a cold heart. But *ideas* quite clearly there must be. And now, though he listened to one Liberal after another, and found in them no suspicion of spinning cold words out of a cold heart, there began to take vague shape in his mind the audacious conception that the trouble with Liberalism — whatever the virtues of individual Liberals — was, surprisingly, just that it had no *idea*. That the conception was quite vague, quite shadowy, he saw with a smile at his own expense. He was even a little shocked at it. But it would not be dissipated by scrutiny. When he found it thus standing its ground, refusing to

vanish at cock crow, he sat down to question it by light of day.

It remained for the time, however, dim and unpleasantly ghostly. But it attained thus much of definition as he examined it — that whatever the idea that the Liberals should put up as the fundamental determinant of their political belief, that idea might be overthrown by something still more fundamental in that belief — by the majority.

His own notion of a political principle or idea was that it should itself be fundamental and constant — as human affairs go — and should, so to speak, govern instead of being governed. The very point of an idea was that it stood over against letting things go as they would; and the final dependence upon majority opinion seemed very much like letting things go as they would.

He jotted these animadversions down in letters home, and went on observing and reflecting. Later, when he had got better settled, and the terrace where he had his lodgings had begun to separate itself into its particulars, acquaintance took up its task of softening judgments with sympathies. His perceptions began to have more color, and the reflections that had commenced misty took on faint lines of definition. With the ounce of compunction that was his usual tribute to the red face of the pillar box after his fingers had released a letter, he had already seen that in denying an *idea* to the Liberals he had overlooked one possibility; — that the belief in the majority might of itself be an *idea* of the kind he was asking for, a steadying and guiding principle.

As a matter of bare logic he knew that there was no necessary relationship between a majority and either wisdom or justice. But he caught himself up at that, remembering that bare logic was far from being all that there was to be said about human affairs. And now as he looked about at the men and women around him, with the curious eyes of a stranger to whom nothing is staled by custom and nothing is taken for granted, and with the growing sympathies of a more inclusive acquaintance than he had ever formed before, he began to perceive that the majority was not a mere mathematical count, but rather was very human, made up of men and women who, within the range of possibility, might themselves be both wise and just. The question after all and at bottom was a question of fact. Establish the fact and the rest could be reasoned. He began to look curiously into the fact.

He was in one of those streets off Bayswater Road — stuccoed ghosts of Georgian fashion — that gather an odd mixture of people but still maintain a kind of identity of their own. It was not an identity of wealth; it was distinctly lodgings. There were rarely occasional villas inside their own grounds, and some of the denizens were idlers; but the general tone of the street was made by “activity” of some kind, and had an intellectual flavor. The denizens were neither economic sufferers nor economic oppressors, but belonged to the fluid parts of the middling class, and were free enough both from poverty and wealth to do with themselves after their own human leanings.

As for our friend, his lingering glance and the



lucid humanity in it broke through the reserve of a good many of his neighbors. Among themselves there was little enough intercourse; the hard consciousness of a settled society held them apart. But the American was outside of it. He had nothing about him but his common humanity; he had no ramifications; he did not signify beyond the significance of his presence. And because he was outside of it he was, humanly speaking, let more into it than they themselves.

The secret of his glance was, perhaps, that it revealed interest without impertinence, and personal distinction without the consciousness of class. It dealt out none of the chagrins that make social comparisons so much harder to bear than personal. At home the irony of his tongue had countered the sympathy and simplicity of his eye, but at home, for him too, the eternal responsibility for the quality of life had edged and roughened many of his gentler qualities. Here, however, he was detached, and life was a spectacle, and he could fall into the very simple bent of his very human nature. There was a sense of relief in this irresponsibility — so pleasant a relief that at times he plunged back into his old militant scorns with a vigour that came from a conscience alarmed at its own relaxation.

A sympathetic serenity, however, was his normal mood; his mind was fallow. He read, sometimes in his own room and sometimes under the dome of the Museum, walked interminably in the streets, sat in the crescent that stretched before the Terrace, and passively cultivated the seeds of acquaintance that blew into his garden.

And slowly, as summer passed and autumn came in, two impressions gathered weight and momentum in his mind. Sometimes as he left the Museum at the approach of dusk and turned eastward toward the City he gave a loose to his legs, and with a mind full of the echoes of ten centuries of life that had resounded on that spot, let them thread the intricate pattern, so planless and so human — street and lane, flagged passage, hole in the wall — which men had drawn there so impersonally under the drive of momentary needs that the triter phrase *time* seemed to be truer than *men* to name the workman and point the moral of the tale.

In a little passage off Cheapside there was a legless beggar whom he found altogether loquacious and delightful, and whom he came to like so well for the shrewd humour with which he confronted good fortune and bad, that one day, in a mood that he afterward knew to be born of his own simplicity, he gathered together an elaborate stock of the strings and pencils that the cripple used, to keep himself inside the law, and sent them secretly by messenger to the accustomed corner. He never saw them again. But when next he stood against the wall of the passage watching the crowd and talking at odd moments down into the cocked ears below him, he heard in terms of gay and sophisticated irony the tale of his own naïveté.

"A good 'earted fool 'e was, sir, whoever 'e was, but a fool just the same. 'Arf a day more and crool ruin 'd a 'ad me. 'E don't know 'is economics, 'e don't."

Bagdad or London, age of romance or dismal sci-

ence — what matter was it? Human nature remained unchanged.

To stand there at that thronged corner of a bye street, and to watch faces; to catch fragments of talk, of despairs, of passions, of ribaldry and hope; to see beneath the negligible cut of altered styles the immemorial types — fishwife, porter, coster, publican, lean sharper of the law, saintly-eyed priests, cripples from the wars, pale dapper clerks, robber barons of the Castle or the Street, painted women; or to sit in dingy taverns and hear the wranglings of immemorial prejudice, obstinate and passionate over immemorial beer; or in urbaner ordinaries and catch the ancient parochial platitudes of life and death, of egotism, of caste, of the neglect of merit — to observe all this with sympathy and detachment was to lose track of the century and feel the slow inertia of the bulk of human life.

At such moments the recollection of his readings, through years in his library at home, and more recently under the dome of the Museum, took on a peculiar light. It was a light that was starry in its lucid and utter detachment. Plato, Jesus, Antoninus, Dante, St. Francis, Pascal, Carlyle — the list indeed was long, but they stood out sharply against the great immensity of the night. In them, and in the stream of their tradition, was matter to make over a world that had been more rational and more kind. What more, or better, was to be said to the reasoning mind or the pitying heart? And how little they had prevailed with the great turgid stream of life!

In his earlier and lonelier days in London such

visions were frequent enough to have become impressive. He owned grudgingly their truth, and saw in them the sad bidding to infinite and pitying patience. But though he longed to drag his Liberal friends to that beggar's corner and bring home to them the unchanging spectacle and humble their confident eagerness, he caught also for his own warning the odor of poppies that clung about such broodings.

It was with some violence to his mood, therefore, that he took himself humorously in hand. The sense of the inveterate inertia of the mass of life still went with him, ground note of a complex harmony; but he turned himself back to his terrace with the recollection of his own fugitive littleness, and reminders that he was of his own time, and that the problem of his own time was the fusing of those two streams, dark and light. That, at least, was the proposal of the Liberals; and it was with them that he was just now concerned.

He began now to see more sharply the terms of his problem. If the Liberals held out hopes that in the fusion it should be the light that had the better of it and not the dark, he had, here on the Terrace, something significant to watch — something of the bare terms of the actual process. For in the course of his first months there he had caught the quality of his neighbourhood. It was intelligent; it was Liberal, it was in an especial degree what the Liberals wanted to make of the whole mass — it was economically free. He had but a little while before been inclined to complain that Liberalism had nothing else at the bottom of its bag. But now he

was not so confident of his old assurances; at all events he was more tolerant of the Liberal faith that given economic freedom the rest would follow. And so he set about to observe what, stripped of the adventitious and the eccentric, typically did follow with these men and women whom Liberalism had finished with. He wanted, above everything, to be actual. If the case of the majority was to be grounded on the fact, the fact was the thing to be looked at. And here was a significant sample of the fact.

There was enough humour in him, of a self-directed and ironic kind, to keep his thinking sane, and the inevitable pride of perception never quite deceived him into a belief that his score of motley neighbours were an ultimate picture of the Liberal accomplishment. But his humour could work both ways, and if he demanded that the counters of his own ideas should be fleshly and real, he demanded no less of the Liberals themselves. And it seemed to him, then and afterwards, that though the Liberals showed a throbbing sense of reality in conceiving their sympathies, and winning the sympathies of others, there was something a little detached and abstract about their thinking in the large. Some of their phrases — the average, the will of the people, majority opinion — seemed to him to have got their warmth rather from the emotions that made the Liberal motives than from a warm reality in the conceptions themselves. Their moral substance dissolved under concrete inspection. Their cold statistical values seemed far enough removed from the personal immediacy of the very human problem that politics at its best set out to solve.

What he saw there on the Terrace was that he had, if not an equivalence of the Liberal goal, at least a spectacle that could keep warmth and reality in his phrases. If they were, these neighbors of his, quite startlingly individual, and concretely set up on their own legs, and set going by their own spontaneities, he detected the last touch of their very human reality in their proneness to fall into human tendencies. For one thing they were all Liberals. That was, indeed, almost the only thing that they had in common, but they did separately manage to fall into many of the grooves and ruts of the time. If they did not violate reality by being generic abstractions, neither did they violate it by being unique. They were knowably human, and quite humanly sociable, and lonely, and anxious to accrue somewhere, to belong to something bigger than themselves, to give some significance to the grievous isolation of individuality.

How far they blew with the winds of opinion in England he could hardly venture to say. Aristocratic tradition there still had vitality. But he knew his own country, and as he looked about him at that London terrace, he seemed to see, beneath the surface, something of the array of moral and intellectual diversity that touched to the life his picture of Liberal America.

A September fog — his first fog in London — was enriched in its associations, if not made more endurable, by what at home would have been a painful but unromantic twinge of rheumatism. Here, however, he felt entitled to the honors of gout, and bore himself between twinges with a humorous sense of

this visitation as a thing of quite literary quality. There was a more substantial reward in it, however, in the fact that it brought the beginning of a new and more intimate stage in his acquaintance with the curious medley in the Terrace. The garrulous sympathy of his landlady, no doubt, spread the rumor that the poor American gentleman was laid by with the more euphemistic malady. He became promptly the object of much good feeling and not a few acts of kindness. They came to him, these kindly neighbors, with the warrant of previous conversations in the lounge, and with the tradition of his Americanism to excuse their unreserve. They came singly, for they held aloof from each other, and came again, finding in him a disinterested attentiveness that was soothing to their egotisms. They talked about themselves, as interesting men do, and as uninteresting men do, and they were often intimate in the impersonal manner of people who are immersed in special ways of judging the world.

In the semi-detachment that comes with chronic and not too acute pain in a remote member, he watched the little drama of conflicting ideas that the house was staging around him, the rasping antagonisms implied and expressed in their allusions to each other, their mutual avoidances and constraints. So that his days of confinement, when he came to look back on them, took on the colors of quick and significant action. His memory of it all was no doubt highly selective, but the stuff that he found in it was clearly enough present in the reality.

The first one to knock timidly at his door was a woman. She lived in a little back room on his own

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floor, overlooking an area and a whitewashed wall. Twenty years before, when she was twenty, she had written a novel, *Hearts Aflame*; a copy of it lay now, its lavender boards soiled and broken, on the parlour table below. She had never got another published. Soon the world had begun to frighten her, and she had taken to "metaphysics." Her face was thin and the veins showed on the meager cheeks, but there were delicate lips and dark eyes that still showed the old dreams that once at least, and in the cold world of print, had come true for her. Now her eyes hovered and never came to rest. With a rustle of black taffeta she fluttered in at the bidding that answered her knock, unheeding, in the feverish elevation of her mission, of the dressing gown and the bandaged foot that for a brief moment embarrassed her host.

"Have you tried metaphysics?" she asked abruptly, upright and tentative in the chair he offered.

He answered no, hardly aware of her meaning, and she hurried on. She was sure it was medicine that kept him ill, for all sickness and all evil were only illusions. She murmured on vaguely about the goodness of God, the control of matter by mind, and the unreality of material things. And then she came back to medicine, which somehow seemed the greatest evil of all, and terribly real.

"You must ask me questions," she said. "It isn't easy to grasp it all at once."

What could he ask? He inquired whether she wore a cloak in winter, had a fire in her room, whether she ate. And she answered very gently,

catching the drift, "We haven't got so far as that, yet."

After a while, when he was silent, she added, "It is a religion; it is very sacred." And then more intensely and a little bitterly, "I am reviled here. I have spoken to them all, as I must, mustn't I, seeing how they suffer from their lack of faith. But they go on with their little human schemes to make a bad world better, when all the time they keep it evil by thinking it evil."

Someone knocked at the door, and the kitchen slavey pushed into the room with a tray of tea things. When the pale, slatternly little maid had slid away to double her provision the two were silent. Something in the pitiable hopelessness of this apparition jarred on the visitor's last note and made it hard to resume. Before the return of the forlorn little wretch with fresh supplies, another knock brought in other visitors. The fluttering guest rose and said she must go, with a baffled gesture that made her going almost a flight.

The new comers were a pair of biologists from overhead, man and wife. They had stopped in, they said, on their way home, the fog having put an end to work. They had heard that he was laid up. There was a hesitation in their manner that the departed guest was clearly accountable for, and a constraint set in that even tea with its ancient sociability — it had been finally mustered for three — did little to relieve. Only the clinking resurgence of the medicine bottle put them wholly at their ease and gave them a point of contact.

The man was young, with uncouth, roomy clothes,

a sprawling figure, and a droning voice. But he had hands that were delicate, slender, and deft like a woman's, and eyes that needed no supplement of feature — wide apart, and keen or dreaming as the talk shifted from fact to vision or vision to fact. His wife was a girl in years, plain and calm and competent, speaking to the subject without the feminine consciousness of the listener. They had met and loved in a laboratory, and had gone out one afternoon and been married by a magistrate. The quiet romance of their union still burned in their eyes and told in their gestures, whether they talked, as they did, of political hopes, or of the large dreams of their science.

When medicine was disposed of and tobacco was produced they settled themselves comfortably, divining the welcome in reaction from their momentary doubts. They both smoked, the man nervously, and his wife with a sedative calm at once homelike and revolutionary.

"We're a queer lot here," the biologist mused, and his wife added, "I dare say you've had a taste of us."

"I shall hate it when I have to go," our friend returned heartily.

"They're good-hearted enough," the scientist went on. "And if they'd stop there it would be a good thing for England. Only they won't. They try to think. Look at them. No, I'm not personal — it's just because they take up these cults and get run away with that it isn't like talking scandal to speak of them. They move like puppets; somehow they're not their own men. And when you speak of them you're speaking of something impersonal and threatening — disintegrating."

He omitted courteously the guest who had just gone, but sketched out others in the house and set them forth in clashing collocation — a Bergsonian who was for reasoning away the reason, an aesthete who was for sentimentalizing life, a pedagogue with a modernistic cult of spontaneity, a socialist with a dream of industrial bureaucracy, a social worker drunk with a vision of syndicalist overthrow, and worst of all the eternal gentleman with his static, visionless immaculacy and his hopeless content with polite manners, polite learning, polite charity, polite inanity. There they were, threatening between them to smash the only hope of unity that reason held out for the future of poor England — and poor America, for that matter. That only hope was science. Then he sprawled at reflective length in his chair and launched the great scientific dream, the praise of its discipline, the vision of its gradual absorption of all that was now going at loose ends under the care of literature, and morals, and politics, and art.

They left at the appearance of the dinner tray, and the doubts that were hovering in our friend's mind as to the all-sufficiency of science to take care of many of men's aspirations remained there undivulged. He promised himself to review them over his coffee and cigar, but his coffee and cigar were shared by the anti-intellectualist and it was impossible to share with this common enemy the ironies that he had for science. For those ironies, after all, were sympathetic and not fundamentally hostile.

The new visitor, with the prospect of two fair hours before him, set out to shatter the reason with irrefragible logic. The demonstration went forward

apace, step by step, interrupted now and again by inquiring visitors, who glanced at the guest and would not stay, and ended with the reason quite in the ruck and discard of the world's rushing progress through time.

The loneliness of the second morning of confinement was relieved by quite his most welcome visitor. He was a young man of a reflective turn and greying temples, who came toward noon with a mess of sausages, and stayed to reveal a very endearing nature. He was a writer on Liberal doctrines, and eked out a living in several minor lectureships. Our friend amused himself by picturing him as a modern version of the old Whig pamphleteer. But the type had changed, in externals at least. In place of the old blind partisanship and the old emotional loyalty that went with the old ideas, there was the clear, rational coolness that consorted with the term *science*, which he used to designate his political theories with. The change was consistent with the change from the moral to the economic ends to which Liberal theory had been so largely reduced. It was beneath this exterior, however, that the old Whig still smouldered — in a burning loyalty to the one human idea that lay, by faith, in the Liberal principle — the belief in the majority. He had a generous hatred of compulsion, a hatred that in someone less ardent, a little more aloof, would have played hob with his modern Liberal programme of sweeping regulation and restriction. His ideas were tolerantly put, but there was a brooding undertone running through them, a kind of mute anger at the life at his elbow, at the perverse spectacle of mad divergence that kept men so unsympathetically apart.

"For all our interests, our best interests," he said, "are one, you know, common, co-operative. And yet, look at us here —"

But when the pedagogue, with his theories of spontaneity in education, came in, he himself was fain to go. The spectacle of that demoralizer of common foundations and common standards was too much for his patience to bear.

Others dropped in on that day and the next in a bright stream of clashing colours — the syndicalist with his *élan vital*, the socialist with his rational, hard, schematic, but beautiful Utopia, an Anglican priest with brooding loyalty to a waning cause.

It was on the fourth day, when a warm sun and a sudden relief from his malady took him out into the crescent, that he met the æsthetic critic of whom the scientist had spoken — a short stocky man dressed always, morning and evening, in a jaunty Norfolk jacket with a flare, a Windsor tie, and extraordinarily stout boots. The morning invited talk, and the sun, or a native bent, or both, charmed out of the little man the eccentric tale of his own philosophy.

He had got demd sick, he said, of propriety. He had seen it until all the world had begun to look like a box of puppets with strings pulled by a machine, forever the same, without variation, without intelligence, without imagination. He'd looked behind for the operator. Dead! He'd looked for the inventor. Dead, too! He'd then got out of the box himself, and life was a jolly bit more like it outside. Here he was, quite alive, and he knew it because everything that came into his mind was something

new. He had chucked the machine for good and all. What he was looking for was life, and life was spontaneous — not the same thing over and over. As for laws, they were the joke of some devil who wanted things to happen always the same way. Artists were the people with life as he understood it. They needed no laws; the instinct of beauty kept them from anything nasty. And then he got on to his scheme for social regeneration — a kind of Liberal anarchy mitigated by æsthetics and propelled by impulse.

It was a little inconsistent that, forgetting his principles for the moment, he should respond to his own clean impulses and damn the uglifying verses of the poet who lived on the top floor of the Terrace, and whom our friend had seen once or twice in the passage. For himself, the critic did the arts for an afternoon paper — and his thumb jerked toward the villa that flanked the Terrace. He told then about "Old Flash," his proprietor, owner of a half-penny sheet in Fleet Street, that said wicked things about the aristocracy at seductive length, and illustrated with much bare flesh from the drawing-rooms and the music halls.

He left our friend to musings about "Old Flash." He remembered now to have seen that gentleman from his own window that overlooked the garden of the villa. The villa itself was a matter of flaming riches and flaming taste, with footman and butler and coachman in incredible livery. But the garden belonged to another world, and answered to the care of a spare and bandy Weshman in inalienable shirt-sleeves and flat cap. It was there, in the summer,

that he had seen a boy of ten for the first time back from school, thin and pale, and going about from spot to spot watching the gardener with wistful eyes. Later the family were on the wing for Brighton, and the boy was in the garden going about saying good-bye to his pony and his rabbit and his dog. When they found him he was standing before a prickly cactus that he had brought from school in his pocket and planted in a corner. There was language from the pair in the French window, father and mother. It came across the pleasant shrubbery harshly and brutally, and our friend, from his own window, saw the boy's shoulders shrink together as he turned and went into the house. And now as he thought back on this incident that had touched him so much then, it became acutely significant. His habit, right or wrong, was to generalize the color of life, to find in the private springs of personal character the subtle indications of the quality of large affairs. There was something sinister, therefore, in this incident, as he brooded upon it. His idea spread from the single character whom he had seen in the French window, out to the infinite repetitions of it in that half-penny sheet dropping their indirect suggestions, and treading them down day after day into the minds, dull or receptive, that made up majorities.

A kind of baffled, helpless impotence seized him at the thought of the uncontrollable forces at work against the efforts, generous but weak, of those who, like his friend of the sausages, dreamed of a people united in a single intelligent purpose and working together to a single intelligent end.

He got up to walk off his restlessness. A distant

church bell called back to him suddenly out of the past an older and larger and serener dream of an influence reaching out to all men, and working upon them from within to bring them together with a common and moving impulse. He had a fleeting sense that only so, working through character to outer expressions of it in social relations, could any reform ever make over the life they were all trying so desperately to make over. The turmoil of struggle to mold it from without, to regulate the expressions themselves, leaving the character untouched, or touched only with the restive animosities of restraint, struck him as tremendously, desperately futile.

It was perhaps this sense that led him, a few minutes later, to fall in step by genial invitation with a minister who cogitated his sermons there, up and down on the gravel. In a few more minutes he was listening to the curious tale of that shift from Christianity to economics that was going on in the churches — perhaps more in America than in England — in the name of progress.

“Change and evolution are the law of life,” he heard the ministerial voice saying by his side, and it came to him stridently across the quiet of his serener vision of a moment before. “And if it is true that Jesus did look upon possession as an evil and poverty as a good, still we may hardly cling to ideas that are outgrown. Christianity is not static; if it is to live it must grow with the progress of ideas.”

He was rational and hearty and disposed to talk. Our friend put the point of his doubts to him.

“It is still possible, though,” he said, “to despise riches and put one’s heart on other things. Mightn’t that attitude still deserve to be called Christianity?”

"Historically, perhaps," the other returned. "But that would be to stand still."

"But why, then," our friend pursued, "keep to the old term? There is a bit of stability in the name that might be got rid of."

The answer was hard to put at once, delicately and directly, but it came at last, out of many words, that to give up the term Christianity would be to lose much of the credit that the centuries had accumulated about the sacred name.

Our friend crept back to his room and meditated.

"There they are," he mused, almost a year afterwards, in a letter to the friend for whom he had accumulated this gallery of portraits. "Do you like them? For myself I find myself more tolerant as I grow older, though I have a good deal of sympathy for the bitterness of Burke in his old age. I suppose it is easier for us, who hate the same things, to take them more casually; we have grown up with them. At all events, when I come to give up my rooms — shut up my box of puppets, as the æsthete would have it — I shall go away with a good deal of the desolation that comes at parting.

"But I've watched the comedy almost out; they've begun to reappear in the same parts, and repeat the same speeches, with sincerity indeed — the sincerity that makes them so likable — but each one with the inner twist that sends him off on his own tangent to add his own disorder to the great confusion. If it were only a London terrace I could take them æsthetically, as the Bergsonian is so fond of recommending, and I could smile and call quits. But they

are more than a London terrace. I have eaten their chops and drunk their wine and their beer, and I know how separately real they are. But they are representative none the less.

"Have I played them a little false, to have watched them, to let them talk, and thus to be writing to you about them. I hope not. If I've looked on at the play it has been with sympathy, and if I have been amused, or found them wanting, it was no part of mine to set up as their director. Even here I have no wish to ridicule them. But I have wanted answers to certain questions, and I've let them play on and the answers have come out. I have seen them here, irreconcilable, with nothing but their Liberalism in common — and only that in common I suspect because it has no ideas to disturb them — without an education in common, without common intellectual standards, without common ethical standards, inimical to each other. And I have asked them, silently, what they themselves actually believe, in the one thing that they can assert to be common to their social philosophy — their belief in majority opinion.

"Well, they don't believe in majority opinion.

" 'You are aware, sir,' the woman with the frightened eyes said to me, one day as we sat alone in the lounge, 'that we are few here. I understand that we are many in your country. But here we are few, and little understood. Only yesterday a meeting was mobbed in Kent, and everywhere we are ridiculed. But for us who know that God in His goodness could create no evil, such things only strengthen us in our faith.'

"'God bless you sir,' the jaunty, good-souled aesthete said on another occasion, 'they're a jolly prim lot, I tell you. I can't help liking them, for they're my own people, but they're as near mummies as they can be in this climate. The human atmosphere here is as dry as Egypt.'

"I suggested the great English humourists.

"'Ah,' he returned, 'the reason England's had so many great humourists is because she's had so many good subjects. We have some intelligent men, you know, and they can't help seeing. But the run of them — ah, we go to France for intelligence — or I dare say America,' he added out of his goodness.

"'Our trouble is,' the scientist explained, 'that every upstart wants his son to be a gentleman, and sends him off to a polite school where he is to get a jumble of dead languages and dead knowledge. It isn't only Oxford and Cambridge that are the curse of English education, but every public school and all the little private ones that ape them and pander to the snobbish ambition of people on the make. A few here and there break loose and find their way into science. But it's a kind of accident with us. Our education is rotten. The worst of it is that it's the exact expression of our intelligence. By and large, you know.'

"Shall I go on, or does it grow monotonous?

"'There are so few,' the social worker complained sadly, 'who really are interested. There's a great deal of talk and a great deal of polite and fashionable slumming, but only a few people really care. When you go down into the East End and see the life of it and the mass of it, it is overwhelming —

the sense of all that is to be done, and the sense that over there to the West and out through the whole country those others are shutting themselves off from a knowledge of conditions here, or if they know are shutting their hearts against a care for them. Here among ourselves sometimes we try to believe that we have awaked the world to the crime of all this poverty and suffering. We read our own papers and go to our own meetings, and fill up our lives with it till we get to thinking that all the world is as alive to it as we are. But we have only to look off to the horizon to see that the world goes on much as ever, indifferent, each man the center of his own universe.'

" 'You mustn't listen to most talkers about socialism,' said the socialist. 'They give you a wrong notion altogether. They don't go to the heart of it; they want more than they've got, and socialism looks like the best way to get it. The real thing is a philosophy and a sympathy, not a grab.'

"A kind of helpless compunction seizes me when I hear these unconscious answers coming out in unguarded moments. They are so human. They speak from their hearts, then, and not by book. They are thinking not by formula but of the majorities they meet and jostle with, the men and women who make up the actual world. In an abstract corner of their minds they find the majority somehow good, but where each one comes in conflict with reality his loyalty goes with his idea. He and his forlorn hope are right against the world. No majority could make them think differently; their consciences would rebel. How could the majority change the right-

ness of their ideas? Each one in the measure of his sincerity would have contempt for the one who could trim his ideas to suit the wind of popular opinion.

"For a time I thought that the Liberal writer was an exception. His particular mission is just this belief in majorities. But in a by-election in our borough in March the majority went wrong. And for a moment, as he came in, mud-spattered and weary after the count, and flung himself down on the couch, a touch of despair seized him. It was no comfort to him for me to point out that however the majority went the fundamental Liberal principle triumphed because the majority had had its will.

"He had done what Liberalism has not done — he had put an idea at the bottom of his faith. He had asked that the majority should be right. And the majority had defected. They may have been right and he wrong. I don't know. But in his honesty he could not change his judgment to suit the vote. And for the moment as he lay there — and I dare say for the hundredth time — he saw as those others had seen, each from his own real contact with the world, that beneath the willful surface of his mind he had no belief in majorities. He caught the disjunction between his fundamental principle and the idea itself.

" 'And yet,' he said, gathering courage from other anchorages of his faith, 'right or wrong, still it is best that they should have their own way. Whatever they bring on themselves they bring on themselves. It is better than the injustice of compulsion that would come from forcing them according to any idea.'

"He was tired and discouraged. He got up and went away, troubled, unhappy, struggling with the inner conflict, a cloud of bitterness darkening his mood.

"The resumption of the point came later from an unexpected quarter. I was visiting upstairs with the uncouth scientist of the keen eyes and delicate hands, and the smooth-browed, intelligent girl, his wife. I had been listening to that vision of life and society as an organism where neither crime, nor beauty, nor happiness, nor will, nor anything human but would find its ultimate niche in the hierarchy of some monstrous physics textbook.

"One doesn't expect too much consistency of men. Life has a way of avenging itself by striking a balance and maintaining its humour. One expects to find an age of feminine suffragists blossoming out in a feminine dress that exaggerates sexual differences. He expects to find among physicists a belief in ghosts; to find Dukes de Broglie of sublime morals and abysmal morality, anti-intellectualists who deny the reason and reason out the denial, feeble Nietzsches proclaiming the doctrine of force, Rousseaus asserting the inherent goodness of men and laying bare their own festering souls. But somehow one is struck by the particular instances; and there I sat amazed, listening to the virulent tirade of the scientist who believed that all life and love and beauty and spirit were but mechanical reactions — his virulent tirade against the simple concept of subordination in social life.

"His science dissolved when it came home to his own will. What he, who pictured all life but as a

vast mechanism, revolted against, was compulsion. His point was the injustice of forcing human wills. You know the curious simplicity of scientific minds when they step over into the human field — a certain credulity of assumption in them. Their charm is that they reason frankly; they know how to differ without invidious heat. And this evening, lured by the argument and by the friendliness of the pair I took up the cudgels.

“Put to it, they believed in government. Believing in government they believed in forcing some wills. And at last they acknowledged a belief in the stronger majorities forcing the wills of the weaker minority. But for me as I listened, somehow the idea of justice faded before that crude picture of the rule of might. They themselves withdrew the plea of justice. They dallied for a moment with another possibility — that society was an organism in which the individual was negligible, that majority opinion represented the final opinion of the organism to which all the members must conform. But in that analogy the idea of justice was but dimly seen, and the concepts of the organism and the negligible individual were too Prussian, lent themselves too well to the hierarchic scheme, to linger long in front of us. We gave up the idea of justice. It was plain that there was no more justice in forcing four men against their wills than in forcing five. Justice belonged to the category of the *idea* and not to that of the *count*.

“It was the girl, with her clear common sense and her touch of feminine practicalness, who shifted the majority rule to more stable grounds.

"‘Whether or not it is just,’ she said, ‘depends upon the rightness of the idea you enforce. But majority rule, as such, is a matter of convenience, isn’t it? If we have government some wills must have their way and others must submit. I should say that it was done in the interest of order, simply.’

"As I sat there under the spell of finality that follows the simplifications of common sense, it seemed as though the last word had been said. Majority rule was a device in the interest of order simply. I thought back with humiliation on that web of complexities that I had tangled myself in. One clear shaft of simple intelligence had done away with those probings after justice and wisdom. If Liberals had really believed in the wisdom and justice of majorities they would have been passive under the verdict of majorities. Once the majority had decided, further agitation would have been impertinence. Nothing would be consistent with a belief in majority wisdom and justice but to cease trying to influence it — to let life drift. No one did believe in the essential wisdom and justice of majority opinion. It was a device in the interest of order simply.

"Then as we looked at the simplified picture, a new perplexity got hold of us. What kind of order, we asked. Any kind of submission made for order of a sort. The question was, what was to be the quality of that order. Was it to be mere mechanic, unthinking submission to any haphazard succession of ideas the majority chanced to hit upon? What kinds of ideas were to be submitted to? And those questions plunged us back into the night, for

Liberalism had no answer to them. It had no idea of its own to offer, no principle to organize a consistent order around. All it had to submit was the will of the majority.

" 'It tries to relieve every one of economic slavery,' the biologist said tentatively.

"But we soon saw that even the perfect accomplishment of that aim left them stranded short of their beginning to have an idea. The Terrace in all its motley rose up before us — more bitterly, indeed, for my hosts than for me, for against their own ideas they felt the terrible menace of all those other inimical ideas that the Terrace revealed. And what order could come out of that chaos? It was just there in that chaos that Liberalism abandoned them. What we saw was that economic freedom was not the essential element of order. The only order that would be tolerable would be a moral order. And Liberalism had nothing in its principles to center a moral order around.

"Rather in its approval of anything that could get a majority behind it, it seemed to echo the serious banter of the jaunty aesthete. I met him in the park one day soon after this conversation.

" 'Not wisdom — well, rather not!' he laughed, and paused, and I saw him there with his hands in his pockets picturing the great British public in his favorite vision. 'Fancy, wisdom! And I dare say it's no more just for a score of men to force a dozer to put water in their beer than for a dozen to force a score to put water in their beer. On the contrary, I call it dem'd ungentlemanly, might is right, and that sort of Prussian thing. But if we've got to

have laws, and being political animals I dare say we shall go on having laws, the thing is still to have as many on their own as possible, and that's the majority, and as few as possible knuckling under when the strings are pulled, and that's the minority. It's one of the beneficences of Providence, don't you see, that there are fewer in the minority than in the majority.'

"I wanted to ask why on their own, if their own were so ludicrous as his favourite vision pictured them, or they were so unwise as he imagined them. But such a complaint would not have reached what was the point with him. It was the flashing colors, the variety, the quick changes of irregularity and disorder that caught his eye and pleased his æsthetic sensibilities. It struck me suddenly as significant that of all the denizens of the Terrace he was the only one untouched by discouragement — the only one whom Liberalism seemed to satisfy in the reality.

"It was the Liberal writer who brought the point back to the problem of order. I found him one morning in the crescent with his notebook open on his knee. He put it up when he saw me, and made room on the iron bench beside him. It was August bank holiday. There was a low white drift under a blue sky, such as makes a pastoral of London, sometimes, when there is a blow in the Channel.

" 'I dare say we shall have it alone today,' he said, and I knew that there was something behind the tone of his voice. He was irritated. 'They'll be off to the Heath to see the costers,' he went on with a glance at the Terrace. And then, after a pause — 'A curious lot! I'm afraid they'll have given you a

strange notion of us in England. They've mostly gone daft. They are people of one idea — each one with his own, you know — and you know how a single idea plays hob with weak minds.'

"He went on about them at irritable length. There was nothing petty in his grievance. He had an unusual degree of sweet reasonableness in his personal nature. But the concrete facts obtruded harshly on his principles, and it was upon his principles that his heart was set.

" 'What we aim at,' he said in his large way, 'is the socialization of life. You have suggested that we have no idea, but that is our idea — to quicken the sense of social responsibility, to spread the practice of social co-operation, to stimulate the consciousness of the common good. The more wholly the people take part in government the more they must learn to work together. For order, real order, and not a mere mechanic submission, can only come from the presence of some consistent and constructive idea, a common standard of judgment, and a common ethical criterion — a whole people working together. And these people —' he looked up sadly and there was no malice in his eyes — 'look at them, each penned up in his little crib of an idea, full of mutual suspicion — Old Flash and the priest, mental healer and biologist and anti-intellectualist, socialist, æsthete, rotten poet, social worker — each one absorbed in his own two-penny theory, flying off at a tangent, thinking of each other with contempt, and thinking of the state only when they spare a moment from their own interests, or when they hope to serve themselves by drumming up a

majority for their own ends. What have they in common? What do they try to have in common. They call themselves Liberals, but they get together in nothing but their hatreds.'

"I quoted a passage from Burke's *Reflections* anticipating a time when 'laws were to be supported only by their own terrors and in the concern which each individual may find in them from his own private speculations, or can spare to them from his own private interest.' He looked up suddenly, startled by the similarity of these old words to his own. Then with the distant gaze of his thoughtful moments his unseeing eyes rested on a blue-coated policeman plodding down the walk beyond the palings.

" 'The time has gone,' he mused, and I saw him dropping back into the style of his lectures, 'when we think of laws as resting their final sanction upon force, or when we think of force as the outward expression of law. Rather we think of laws as the outward expression of our governing ideas, the codification of our social will and purpose, the overt and explicit embodiment of our civilization, enacted and published to form the center to which uncertain wills and straying purposes may be attracted, and about which maturing minds may be formed.'

"As I gazed after the distant policeman I knew that my companion was dreaming his dream. He had forgotten the Terrace — Old Flash pandering to class envy and hatred, the mental healer closing her eyes to evil, the syndicalist subverting order and reason, the poet uglifying life, the æsthete undermining moral standards, and all those others riding

off on their intellectual hobbies farther and farther from the centre and from each other, encouraged to fly off by a fundamental and pervasive doctrine, that social virtue lies not in the rightness of the idea, but in whatever can muster numbers behind it.

"‘And meantime,’ I asked, drawing him back to the present ‘to come at the dominance of that moving, common idea?’

"‘Meantime,’ he echoed, musing for a moment; and then waking up to the curt style of his polemic articles, ‘meantime it is not a belief in their wisdom, and it is not a belief in their justice. It is a loyalty to the people in spite of their defects. For it is the Liberal belief that men can be educated to common standards, that they are persuadable to right thinking.’

"We were both silent. I thought of the pedagogue upstairs, and the whole movement in education, and how now that majority opinion had laid hands upon it education was promptly ceasing to lay down common standards, but was diversifying itself more and more, and earlier and earlier in the child’s life, and giving to the young as they matured less and less of a common basis of thought and mutual understanding.

"I thought again — and ever again — of the medley there in the Terrace whose random diversity and unbalanced extremity had so roiled the Liberal theorist. The Liberal aim had been accomplished in them; they were economically free; they were persuadable; *and they had been persuaded!*

"I left him there, sad, and resolutely hopeful, his notebook on his knee."

"For me the comedy was played out. Have I been fantastic, or was the extravagance real? Have I made too much of the bare contrast of reality with the orderly theory? Merely to play up the contrast is easy, and unjust. Livable houses, houses with children, come short of the dream of the motherly housewife. But the kindly guest makes allowances; if he is human he likes the litter and accumulation of the homely living-rooms better than the flawless and inviolable parlors. But he likes, I imagine, to feel the dream of order potent behind and beneath the day's disorder — to know that it is the day's disorder, and not the week's, or the year's — incidental and not organic.

"Can this Liberal dreamer, with his noble pity for suffering and for thwarted longings, and his vision of a people unified through common standards and common aims, hope to realize his dreams? Or is there something incommensurable as between the *idea* and the rule of the majority? The majority is not inevitably wise and just, but neither is it inevitably unwise and unjust. At any one moment it is a matter of fact. So I have tried to look at these people here, so typical, it seems to me, of the great restless democracies. I catch the mournful cadence of my words, and you may smile; I do myself. But I have looked further to generalize the view — to see the kind of plays that they encourage in the theaters, the kind of sermons they listen to in their churches, the kind of books that sell best, because they buy them, the kind of men they put into office — and the spectacle is not heartening.

"I can find no intelligent Liberal who bases his

hopes on the present quality of the people. It is a trust that they may be persuaded to better thinking that feeds the Liberal faith. I have talked to Mr. Wells, that arch-dreamer of a better day, and beneath his simple kindly manner I have seen a sad and sacred anger at the stupidity of human inertia. I have seen in his brooding face a sense of impotence to make men see the lucid ideas that seem so simple, so obvious to him who has spent his years in thought. But for the great masses — they are still to be won.

"Can they be persuaded? More especially does the Liberal doctrine tend to persuade them? Is there anything inherent in the fundamental Liberal principle of majority rule beyond the mechanical order that comes from minority submission? This is my problem. This is the heart of my quest.

"For my own part I can find nothing more. Wisdom and justice are not inherent in majority opinion; no idea is inherent in it. No moral idea is more sacred than the majority itself. Even its constitutions are coming to be resented as too great checks upon its vagaries. The men that make up majorities, indeed, may be persuaded to moral ideas; that, let me repeat, is the great Liberal hope. But when we come to ask what they are to be persuaded to through Liberalism, we come to the great contradiction. Liberalism has no ideas so sacred as any other ideas that the majority may enact. It has no nucleus, no center about which to organize an order. It has taken these errant, earnest men and women of the Terrace to the end of its tether. And there they are, as they are. It has nothing more to say to them. Or if individual Liberals plead with

them to bring the masses from poverty, even that plea aims only to bring the masses into the condition of the Terrace itself. It does nothing to bring moral order into the intolerable confusion that the Terrace itself presents. And so long as that confusion endures, what real hope is there that even that aim may be accomplished?

"Modern Liberalism impresses me with its paradoxes. Its avowed aim is to socialize life. But to me it appears to work only in the other direction. Its influence from the first has been to destroy the unifying agencies. Personal loyalty has gone with the passing of personal rule; a common ethical standard has gone with the decay of religion; a common intellectual standard has gone with the democratization of the schools. And it has put nothing in their place.

"It is a curious thing to notice that the uniform dissolution of each of these unities has been in the non-moral direction of economics. Under the direction of majorities politics has become a matter of the regulation of business; the church tends to become a propaganda for the amelioration of the poor, and the schools a training for vocation.

"I know that there are those who can speak scornfully of the people, and who will point out that inevitably the first consideration of the mass of men will be for their bellies. But for my own part I can't speak in such scornful terms. Seeing how well even the best of men feed themselves if they can, I can hardly scorn those who often go hungry for wanting to do the same. It is not a case for contempt; the economic need fastens on all of us.

But it is suggestive of the destitution of Liberal ideas, to their want of moral principles — I mean of course constructive principles looking toward a moral order — that their politics, in the very broadest sense of the term, should descend to the irreducible minimum of economics — fall of its own weight to the bottommost level where the bare mechanic necessities of life catch us all. What poverty of spirit it reveals! How meagre the appeal to the imagination, to the ardent loyalty of youth, to the faith that we are something more than animals to be fed and kept fat. Do they imagine that by paring down our sense of humanity to the economic limit we shall care enough about the whole affair to be much concerned for the miserable stragglers? Don't they see that it is just by centering our whole attention upon the economic struggle that the economic struggle grows most fierce? Can't they see that the mitigation of economic evils comes, not from economics itself, but from motives that can find no place in their dreary statistics and dismal textbooks — that it comes, when it does come, from a large and generous sense of the dignity and destiny of mankind?

“They say that their aim is to socialize life, to animate it with social sympathy, to make the laws the nucleus about which maturing minds may centre their conception of an eligible life, and to which straying wills may conform. But what, in the fact, do they offer, what dominant principle to bring the many together under a common moral standard, to give their lives a common motive and a common purpose? No moral idea that the majority may not

overthrow at will, nothing to unify that majority, nothing to give it a single common aim and tend to hold it in that direction.

"The people are not to blame. The moral idea is personal, the expression of the humane element of the spirit; but the majority is large, impersonal, mechanical. The Liberals, with their faith in the majority, call themselves progressive. Progressive! Can there be anything so fixed, so unprogressive as the great impersonal average that finds its expression in the majority — the elemental beneath the roots of our developed differences? It fluctuates, it sways back and forth within the narrow limits, and gives to the myopic the illusion of change; and to the myopic change is always progress. But in the large it stays the same, and its politics sink to the expression of that irreducible minimum of wants and desires that affect us all, that mechanic pressure of economic need. Is this but a pretty theory? The politics of every Liberal nation *has* reduced itself to this minimum.

"Is there no way out, no movement forward, no real progress, nothing but the swaying back and forth in rebellion against this force that Liberalism renders us into the power of? Liberalism itself rebels now at this extreme and now at that; it began with *laissez-faire* till *laissez-faire* grew intolerable, and now it has turned about and is all for regulation and restriction. But still we agitate ourselves in the mechanic field of economics, and Liberalism offers us nothing to lead us out. Nothing can lead us out but the moral principle.

"And now, though you smile, I must offer you

another paradox. Sometimes I have a gleam of penetration into the possibility that it is the fear of having a moral principle that is at the center of Liberal strength. For a people to have such an idea, to govern themselves by it, as a man of character governs himself by his principles, would perhaps soon grow grievous to many, soon seem to subject them to the will of those who still stood loyally to it. And if they who still held to it were fewer than the majority, the cry of compulsion, of tyranny, would rise against them. Not that the majority objects on principle to compulsion, or to the tyranny of enforced ideas. There is the minority who must submit. Moreover Liberalism has become the party of the high hand; it has quite gone in for sweeping control. One may sympathize with the feeling of the majority — at least one may understand it — in case it finds the principle maintained but by the minority. Why should the few coerce the many? Men want their own way, and so long as there is recourse to the vote the many may have it, whatever the wisdom and justice of the principle. Liberalism offers them that — the power to have their own way; that is its attraction; that is its strength. The value of a principle is its power to guide the will when the will rebels, but Liberalism offers none to guide the majority when their will rebels. They have by Liberal theory — the only Liberal theory — recourse to a Liberal principle more fundamental than any rational or moral principle.

“For Liberalism is the government, *par excellence*, of the doctrine of might. Authority shifts with the shift of power; it goes with numbers, and not with

the idea. Numbers add up into power and not into wisdom and justice; and power belongs to the irrational forces. That is the distinguishing quality of Liberalism. And this submission to numbers has the appeal of finality—the ultimate decision of force. Those who object are eternally of the weaker party. But it is the giving up of the human problem; for the eternal human problem is the problem of the idea.

“‘What ideas?’ I hear you asking. But indeed I have not been looking for specific ideas. I have only been looking for conditions under which any ideas have a chance to be established and maintained. It is not that individual Liberals themselves have no ideas. I have read slowly through the political writing of the day. It is all avowedly Liberal. The best of it is clear, rational, appealing, offering pictures of social relations, that seem kindly and wise. One may go far before he will find visions that are more perfect. But they are not Liberalism.

“For alas—what chance have they of Liberal realization? They are wrought out, each one, with infinite labour and thought, unified, consistent, their details tested by definite standards, brought into a system from a stable point of view. Each writer has subjected himself to a rigid discipline, holding himself steadily to clear underlying principles, judging this and that by firm criteria, rejecting here, altering there. But dire as his labor is it is simple compared with the task of putting it into currency. And yet, though as a writer he has sweat blood to build logically on the basis of the idea, he must hand it over, as a Liberal, to a multitude from whom on

principle he demands no fundamental idea, no common standard. He has built so well because he has held himself with infinite pains to an underlying moral conception. And they to whom civil life has been entrusted have given up judging on the moral basis; their criterion is the lot, the finality of majority power.

"In the year here on the Terrace I have come to know the Liberal writer well — better than is common between men. He has something that catches the affection — his human side is out, and it is a very likable side. He is serious, but he has humor, too. 'I dare say,' he smiled sadly one day, 'the trouble with us Liberals is that we make Utopias, and think we have been thinking.' We laughed, but the quip was profound. 'And even those Utopias are not alike,' he went on. 'Our visions themselves clash. Until we who make them can agree upon one Utopia among us, it is a brave thing to hope that we can lead a whole people. Even if our Utopias agreed, perhaps it would hardly be a Liberal habit of thought to begin from the point of view of our perfect vision, and try to come by our ends through regulation and restrictions downward. I'm afraid we are still thinking like Cæsar — are still autocrats at heart. We are benevolent enough. And seeing what we think would be good for our people we try to foist it upon them whether they want it or not. We do it, indeed, by majorities. But how are majorities mustered at the best? It isn't assent, but the thought behind it that makes a vote liberal. If we were Liberal ourselves, we who try to lead, we would

want the people to have their *own* will. Only,' he paused, smiling, 'we would want them to want Liberal things.

" 'And here I am,' he continued after another moment. 'I've swung about through the full circle, and I'm ready to begin again proclaiming my Utopia. But sometimes here, as we have talked together, another doubt has got hold of me. Suppose I could have my dream, in all its outward perfection, would I wish it upon the people as we know them? It has been published. They have seen it. There is nothing in it that could not be got, peaceably and by law. But they haven't brought it about. They don't want it. The art critic, your metaphysical friend, the biologist, the pedagogue — they don't want it. When I think of the multitude of madly divergent men and women whom these people typify, I'm not sure that I should want it either. I doubt whether it would seem Utopian to them.

" 'I think we have missed something from our Liberal programme — something that should tend to bring them together, not into agreement, perhaps, but at least into a common understanding. For now what is so egregious is that they don't think alike. They have no common mental counters. The compulsions that would have to be enforced, then as now, would seem unjust to them, just as other people's Utopias seem unjust to me, leaving out of account aspirations that seem to me very dear to human happiness. I'm afraid that we've begun at the wrong end. If we are really Liberals and really want that last and most precious freedom that we prate of — the freedom and equality of the individ-

ual and the embodiment of his will in the laws that govern him — and if we want that will to be Liberal and just, we shall have to begin at the other end. For after all's said, there can be only one Liberal doctrine — such a common and universal education as would tend to bring about common standards of thought, mutual understanding, collective aspiration, and a common sense of justice. When that becomes our fundamental doctrine, then at last we shall become Liberals. The rest would take care of itself.'

"We smiled. Perhaps it was but a moment's return upon himself. But he came near in that moment, I fancy, to seeing the bottom of the well where Liberal truth lies hid. And he put for me, from his own point of view, the thought that had been hovering vaguely over all my year's floundering in the Terrace. As we both stood looking at that smoke-softened façade, I knew that he, as well as I, was thinking of that motley array, and wondering whether a party, made up of them and their like, would ever impose on itself the only doctrine that at its heart can ever be called Liberal."

IV

A MODERN PARADOX

IT was after his return from England that there occurred in our friend's chambers an event of a kind rare enough anywhere perhaps in our none too serious, or all too serious century, and certainly rare enough in the way it occurred there. In recording it — after the manner of Thucydides no doubt, for there was no reporter present — he followed the necessary courtesy of silence imposed by the times concerning a circumstance without which it could hardly have occurred. He could hardly record that in the generous heat of wine his guests grew eloquent and made extraordinarily long speeches, for all that the fine coherence of their ideas and the lively interest they all maintained to the end proclaimed a moderation that was exemplary. That too, malice might have said, was Thucydidean.

The four of them who were there, however, distributed their seriousness and their levity after their own fashion; they took their wine with a light heart and their ideas with a fitting gravity. Or perhaps it was not their own fashion either, for they were all of them in familiar touch with the past, and no doubt drew upon it a good deal in forming consciously or unconsciously their sense of life and its proportions and bounties. Thus they could not

have been quite unconscious of another occasion a long time ago which had its resemblances to the present one, and brought them, on this evening, into pleasant touch with a great tradition. And they could not have brought themselves to frown very severely upon the ancient circumstance that of old had produced such delightful results. But if they thought of this at all it must have been afterwards, for what happened was not planned, and sprang naturally out of the promptings of the moment.

If it had been planned it would have been in a measure cruel, for the situation that developed before the end was not altogether free from pain. The four men had indeed much in common below the level of their differences, but they had gone their different ways and emerged with different conceptions, and these struck across each other at times with the sharp clash that for all of them was the spice of the occasion. But they held their ideas seriously, and one of them shortly found himself in an alliance that must have been hard to bear.

He was the one least known to the others, so that if he had come a little shyly among the three old friends who had gathered on the traveler's return, feeling, with a sensitive nature, a little remote from the rest, his separation was the more acute in the end. For though he found himself aligned with one of the others, it was an alignment full of chagrin and bitterness, and left him poignantly alone. He was a man of peculiarly gentle disposition, and so was removed doubly from the others by the sensitive manners that kept them from offering the sympathy that they felt. The bent of his faith was

humanitarian, and he was allied to that modern school that kindles eagerly at the sight of poverty and deprivation, and offers itself generously to the task of remolding an obdurate society.

Of the others, one was a frank democrat of the old intellectual breed, hard-headed, dry, direct, difficult to kindle but once alight burning with a good flame. The third was perhaps the most interesting of them all. He was a Grecian and a historian, with a body of tremendous bulk and energy, an explosive flow of talk, and an eye that flashed at moments but at others was serene, aloof, or kindly in its quick appreciations or its reflective abstraction. Grote was his *bête noire* — a Whig pamphleteer was his phrase for that historian — and served, by contrast, to emphasize the aristocratic leanings of his own social faith.

Their host was the fourth. He had but recently returned from England where he had spent a sabbatical in reading and reflecting. If in his record of what took place on this evening he played no part it was rather because he had had his say at previous computations than because in fact he said nothing, for his habit was rather copious than otherwise. But the situation that developed, and which made him so sedulous a recorder, developed without need of him, and the report was long enough as it was. An October dawn was threatening the east when they parted.

They had had a late dinner and had returned to their host's fireside and decanters. Their talk was of the problem that the traveler's reflections had brought up, and was full of the endless friendly

clash of their various opinions. It was because the humanitarian's point of view was the one most provocative — being most current — that someone suggested that it be given a full and uninterrupted hearing. From that suggestion the rest followed. They settled themselves about the table and before the fire, and the humanitarian began.

They were all of them moved by the generous ardour that animated his brief exposition, perhaps the more so that they saw in his gentleness of tone and expression the fine restraint of an appealing reasonableness.

"I know," he said, "that you began your democratic career as a revolt against aristocracy. I had almost said 'we,' and with your consent I will say 'we' hereafter, for I feel a part of you now, though then my fathers were little more than serfs in a country that had scant sympathy for that revolt. I have naturally my own sympathy for it. I can not help feeling, however, that as we have gone on through the century and a third since then we have preserved some exaggerations that were proper enough at the moment of reaction, but which are not proportionately important when the moment of reaction is over. I mean especially our mode of thinking in terms of classes. Democracy necessarily began by a concern for the oppressed classes, but as it became less and less a reaction and found itself launched on its own bottom and set out on its own voyage the logic of such thinking has seemed to me inconsistent. The impulse of democracy was, after all, at bottom not sympathy with

oppressed classes, but sympathy with oppressed individuals. And sympathy with the wants and needs of individuals is the constant principle of the democratic ideal.

"Democracy must, of course, act by majorities; but majorities differ from classes by the obvious distinction that majorities are recruited vertically through all strata, not, like classes, horizontally. And they are created by opinion, personal reflection, individual longings and affections. They are created, that is, by those aspirations of the individual for which democracy exists. If you will think, then, of *sympathy with the wants and needs and aspirations of the individual* as the principle that applies progressively in all stages of the developing democracy, you will, I think, see the point of what I should like to say.

"It is on the basis of this principle that I wish first of all to criticise the schools. I mention the schools because I think that there more than anywhere else do we cling, by the inertia of institutions and the force of traditions, to that first impulse of reaction, and to that mode of thinking in terms of classes, which was inevitable at the first leap away from aristocracy. And I mention them, moreover, because it seems to me that they are the agent which can do more than any other agent of democracy to express its active sympathy — do more, that is, to give real force to its underlying principle. The rest of the action of democracy is largely the administrative routine common to all governments; but in the schools it does something fundamental: it gets down to the individual who is so appealing to us,

and gets down to him at the time when he is most pliable, when whatever influences are upon him are determining the degree to which his wants and needs and aspirations can ever be fulfilled. And so whatever is said about the schools is said about democracy in the large. For the schools, I might say, *are* the democracy — its essence in dynamic action.

"The schools have, I think we should agree, clung pretty close to the tradition which they began with, and which they inherited from the older schools of the aristocratic society from which we sprang. It was natural enough. We wanted in our first reaction against aristocracy to give to every one the particular things which we had seen him specifically deprived of under the old régime. Our thoughts were mainly to get away from the hostile shore we were escaping from, but we were intoxicated with our plunder and we began by dividing the spoils. We were not yet calmly settled to the responsibilities of steering our own course. The schools seem to me to be still in the attitude of those early years though we have long since ceased to value the particular booty that we go on dividing.

"That old education was a class education. It was calculated to fit a few people to a definite stratum of society, and to a definite work which pertained to that stratified society. It was, for that class, a training for vocation. It was definitely adjusted to a definite end which pertained uniformly to that class. It thought, so to speak, in terms of class, and formed the minds of its youth to think in those terms. And it was right. It was an adjustment to definitely perceived conditions

"As for us, however, though those conditions no longer hold, and though we no longer need bravely to assert ourselves against them, and though we have no classes at all, our schools are still in that attitude of class self-assertion, and still, instead of acting on our own dynamic principle, cling to that education that was adjusted to those now dead conditions.

"Now that I am launched among platitudes let me utter briefly the two or three others that stand in my way before I go on to more specific, and, I hope, more stimulating matters. The conditions that are changed are these. Instead of a government of the many by the few, we have a government of the many by the many. Instead of a class whose private business is the public business, we have a government by the many whose private business is variously something else. Now, the older education did as an education should do: it served the whole need of those for whom it was calculated. I repeat this obvious truth because it brings me to the heart of my own belief in the matter with the assertion that our present schools, supported by a democracy whose principle is a sympathy with the wants and needs and aspirations of the individual, fail to perform an equally right service for those whom they are calculated to serve. They are not really serving those for whom the sympathy that creates them exists.

"If I may go on I should like to point out wherein and to what extent this seems to me to be true. Some modifications have taken place in the schools, I know, and, I believe, in the right direction. The

pressure of conditions has been too strong to be wholly withstood; but by and large the schools remain the same. In some respects they should remain the same; children should, in all our views, learn their three R's. But now in the upper grades and in the high school they fall heir to a set of studies that are largely linguistic and literary and historical; I need not specify that combination of Greek, Latin, French, German, English literature, and history which, added to mathematics and some science, make up the last half of the usual public school course. I should like, if I may, to call this course by a convenient name for the moment, to avoid the necessity of tedious repetition. The term 'literary' will serve roughly to designate and describe it. This literary course then, it seems to me, fails really to meet the whole needs of the democracy, as it did meet the needs of the ruling class. It would be strange that it should meet equally well such widely diverse conditions.

"Among these literary studies there has been introduced, here and there in recent years, a type of study differing widely from them, and devoted to particular ends—vocational studies I mean—agriculture, mechanics, carpentry, bookkeeping, sewing, cooking. I know how the mention of these homely, workaday matters jars on the delicate ear. Their linsey-woolsey seems coarse after the silken fineness of the more elegant studies. The discussion seems at once to drop into the commonplace and the banal. And yet, if we are democrats it is perhaps preponderatingly with such linsey-woolsey wants and needs and aspirations that we sympathize. We

can not be democratic by sympathizing only with a set of wants and needs and aspirations which we have arbitrarily and against their will set up for the people. We must take them as they are, and follow the democratic principle whithersoever it leads.

"Where these vocational studies have been introduced they exist side by side with the others, each kind taking time that might be devoted to the other. At the best, however, they are a minor part of the whole course, and in most places they have not been introduced at all. And so we may think of the general situation in the schools as having been created by the literary course. If we examine the schools, then, we shall see the great mass of pupils leaving before they reach the high school, and of those who do enter the high school we shall see but a meagre proportion going on to graduation.

"Those who leave before the end of the course leave for some reason. They leave, I think, for one of two reasons. Economic pressure — poverty — is the name of one. As to these, it seems to me that the pertinent question is — What has the school done for them? The pressure that makes them quit school forces them to hunt for work — work of the kind that they can get with their youth, and their inexperience, and their untrained hands. They can not seek apprenticeship; they must have immediate returns. And I can only ask in sympathy: What has the school done for them in their peculiar need? Their peculiar need is to be rescued from the great mass of the unskilled among whom lie the most of our poverty, and squalor, and hopelessness.

It is but little use to say that the schools have other ends to serve. For these miserable ones it serves no other end. They have quit it. And in the time when it still might have done much for them it failed to do the one thing which would have been of help.

"For the rest, they quit because the studies offered them failed to hold them. If they are of the kind to be repelled by those studies, and to quit school for lack of understanding and lack of interest, they too are of the kind to go out into the world of work. They can be more nice in their search; they can pick and choose; but they might have been kept in school, have been better informed, better disciplined, better prepared for whatever tasks they fall to. And of these I should ask: What studies would have held them? Obviously not those which are now forced upon them. Obviously, if any, it would have been those which respond to those interests which drew them from school — training in those vocations toward which they are now drifting.

"If we look on the other and still darker side of the shield we may see in the world at large — made up for the most part of those whom the schools have had their brief chance at and failed to hold — incompetence and shiftlessness, skillless hands that might have felt the simple joys of intelligent labor. I do not know that human joy of whatever kind is great, or pure, or lasting; but I know of none so great, or so pure, or so lasting as this joy, accessible alike to the humblest and the highest, of labor intelligently done. But now instead we may see unskill, uninterest, ignorance, and in their trail poverty

and destitution. The tragedy of poverty lies not so much in what we see as in our sense that it tends to reproduce and perpetuate both itself and the state of mind which produces it, in the children whom it brings forth in such vast quantities.

"Our homely democratic sympathy, then, recognizing the situation, would try to break the vicious circle of this inbreeding poverty by adjusting the schools to the thwarted needs which lie behind it. Though it would admit that no system could do away altogether with poverty, yet it would argue bluntly against whatever impulses preserve a discipline which serves the aspirations of only those who need that sympathy least.

"To this argument from principle it would add another based on the necessary practical working of the democratic régime. The democracy is of course made up of all those who live under it without distinction of birth or wealth or aim. But since the ideas and purposes of these individuals are of necessity various it must proceed in its activities on the basis of majorities. It can not put every man's desires into laws. The minority must submit.

"In the matter of the schools, then, the democracy should logically respond to the needs of the majority. And we have, I think, explicit indication of those needs in that great majority whom the present education fails to hold to the end. The majority must first of all make a living. That is their duty, not only to themselves but to their children whom they arbitrarily bring into the world. And that is their duty to the community upon which those children are arbitrarily thrust for better or for

worse. These children in their turn for the most part take their places somewhere in the industry of the community — one a farmer, one a bookkeeper, one a mechanic, one a housewife, and so on, according to their wants and needs and aspirations, and those harder compulsions that arise from necessity. And since it is their trained aptitude for their chosen tasks that determines their ultimate condition, the democracy which would not only govern them by the restraints and adjustments common to all governments, but would proceed on its own dynamic principle of active sympathy, must, it seems to me — here where it has its intimate personal chance to express the very heart of its ideal — take its expression in adjusting its schools to that all but universal need of making a living. Democratic education, then, I should say, is a training for vocation.

“I hope I may not weary you if I end by reiterating my criticism of the schools as they are conducted to-day, for I think that we shall never attain to a genuine democracy until we have made our schools democratic. The present education which they afford, wholly or partly literary, I should still call aristocratic. I have said nothing of the relative values of the two types of studies for those who now complete the public school course. But if we should suppose that the present course met the wants and needs of all those who completed it, yet they are so far in the minority that it stands, it seems to me, self-convicted of being an adjustment to the demands of the few. In another sense also it is aristocratic. It is — pardon my bluntness — a relic of an older system that flourished when education was

an aristocratic privilege, adjusted to the needs of a privileged class. That class no longer exists. Its habits and qualities of mind are not to be despised perhaps, but they are for the few who have leisure, not for the many who must win a livelihood. And those few who are to have leisure in our democracy can, and in the real world about us often do, obtain that education of privilege by private arrangement elsewhere. And so the education of our existing schools, growing out of an aristocratic ideal, and remaining over from an aristocratic régime, may be suited to that ideal and that régime, but not to a democratic ideal and a democratic régime. As a relic, clinging by inertia to the heart of the new organism, it clogs the free action of that organism. More inharmoniously still it functions in its old way. It is an aristocratic influence in the midst of a striving democracy.

“Such is my faith about these matters which I believe lie close to the interests of us all. We are slowly departing, I think, from that older sense of society in which a government was felt to be something in itself, distinct from the persons who lived under it—an entity apart and aloof. We are coming nearer to a sense that it is an arrangement, an agreement, between free individuals. And as we come nearer to those individuals we perceive that in the end it is they individually who are the largest conscious entities of which we are aware—they individually who think, who hope, who aspire, and they individually who feel that happiness, or blessedness, or, by whatever name, that gratification of the consciousness which has never long been supplanted

as the end of all human action. In democracy I see the first tentatives in the direction of that concern for the separate man which would seem to be the only logical basis of government. Our democracy is imperfect: it still thinks in terms of government, saying from above what shall be the wants and needs of its people; it still thinks in terms of class, educating its people according to the aspirations of a class. But I see that mode of thought slowly breaking up, and in its place a fluid adjustment to that largest conscious entity that can have aspirations to be gratified — the consciousness of the individual man.

"I have spoken of the schools because it is there, and there almost alone, that democracy, the essence of it, has its chance at the thing with which it sympathizes. It is there that it can be more than passively tolerant, can be constructively active, can make its sympathies dynamic — can, in a word, be democratic."

He ended thus, and the others were silent, stirred by that quiet emotion that goes with the voyaging intellect. They had listened impressed, each conscious of a sympathy with the speaker that no burst of eloquence could have roused so well as the simple, appealing reasonableness of his manner and his words. And he had set the tone.

The host turned at last to the Grecian, who sat with his great bulk deep in his chair, his eyes resting curiously upon the speaker. He was a fighter, though a fair fighter, and the others looked with some apprehension for the effect upon the gentle humani-

tarian of the clash which they anticipated. The explosive energy that swept in gusts at sudden moments across his speech, was often disconcerting.

"I must speak," he began, "in a sense from a place aloof and apart, and speak of what I would have rather than what I expect to have. For everyone is agreed that the organization of society that is called aristocratic has had its day; and though the term has a derivative meaning that is not without its appeal, it has, if I may use the expression, a derived meaning that justly, perhaps, has made it abhorrent. It is, at least, so far in the realm of lost causes that unless I can win to my aid the forces of humanitarian sympathy — which I conceive to be the determining influences of the time — I must be exonerated from seeming to plead for an order in which I have personal hopes of distinction."

The humanitarian smiled frankly, and they all joined him, relieved, seeing in the unwonted gentleness of the Grecian's manner and the quietness of his restraint the delicacy with which he had adjusted himself to the tone set by the sympathetic humanitarian.

"I am not willing wholly to forego, however," he continued, "the pleasantness of that derivative meaning of aristocracy, though that meaning is largely ideal. We are speaking to-night of ideals. But there is a distinction which I should like to make before going on to its defence. I utter it for my own warning, hoping that if I put it into words it may keep me from falling into the worst error of doctrinaire theorists. It is not infrequently said that it is un-

fair and illogical to compare an ideal with an opposing reality, contrasting the crystalline perfection of the one with the living defects of the other. And this fallacy I find myself constantly and complacently guilty of. But in escaping from this fallacy it is easy to fall into a slough of futility in comparing ideal with ideal. I suppose that with all of us our social ideals in their purity are methods of human perfection. And so since our ideas of human perfection are not likely, for us here, to vary widely, there is danger of the inanity of comparing equally perfect things. I take it, however, that no living institutions are perfect — that defects and deteriorations are inevitable, however flawless the ideal. The quality of the living institution depends upon the quality of the human nature that governs it; and to admit the frailty of human nature has always been men's chief comfort. And so when we make a choice of systems or institutions we make a choice of probable defects as well as a choice of good. Life is, in this sense, a matter of a choice of evils. Our logical task is not, then, the comparison of ideals, or of ideals with realities, but rather, in so far as possible, to discover the probable mean, and compare attainables with attainables.

"I must, however, speak first of the aristocratic ideal, for it is the one thing sufficiently stable to base my structure upon. I need not search for this ideal beyond the word itself, and I affirm it to be, as the word implies, government by the best. I need not dwell long upon such familiar ground, but before I go on to its defence I should like to mention the equally familiar form which this ideal has

normally taken. It has never, historically, quite lived up to Plato's description of the aristocratic organization, but it has largely resembled it. In that description there is the provision, so hard to democratic ears, that men shall tend to remain in the condition to which they were born. The aristocratic order of society is the arrangement of the organism, with definite and stable gradations from bottom to top. And at the top are those who, by leisure, by training, by freedom from the narrower cares of livelihood, and by a kind of specialization in the large relations of humanity, govern the organism and set the standard and the tone for the whole. This is, in very brief, the aristocratic ideal.

"I mention this in the beginning, and mention it thus bluntly, for I wish at the outset to strike the harshest note in the harmony to which this system tries to attain. The reality itself is not so harsh as the ideal — a relationship which I suspect to be reversed in the democratic régime. I might point out that in the aristocracy from which we democratically rebelled the roll of its great men has from the earliest times largely traversed this ideal stability. Blackstone boasts of it. Whatever softening effect this fact may have, however, upon the severity of the aristocratic ideal, and whatever corollaries might be drawn as to the conditions which produce great men, I shall pass over them for the present because of another significance which I see in this traversal of the aristocratic system — that aristocracy adapts itself to human nature as it is. Its premises are reality, not a faith.

"I should like you to examine this reality at the

base of the structure. Democracy is founded on a belief in the perfections of human nature; aristocracy, on a sense of its imperfections. Aristocracy builds upon the imperfections even of those in whose interests it seems to be established. And now you will see, perhaps, another reason why I was so eager to avoid a comparison of ideals and a comparison of perfections. Aristocracy, based upon sordid reality, would, in such comparisons, seem dull and grey beside the glowing colours, the moving ideality of the democratic faith. I could hope but little to touch your sympathies.

"This, however, is by the way. What I wish to point out is the underlying fact — that democracy is based on ideals and aristocracy on realities — that democracy builds *upon* its ideals, and aristocracy builds *toward* its ideals. That is why, as I conceive, real aristocracies have always been of slow growth while democracies have sprung up in sudden revolts. The one is based upon the more permanent traits of human nature, and the other upon sudden bursts of enthusiasm stirred by the nobility of a generous conception. Democracy rises while that enthusiasm is at white heat, and lasts until it cools. Then as the democratic impulse dies, and the normal range of human qualities and defects regain their normal proportions, the tendency sets in again toward aristocracy. I should say that if this is true aristocracy has a deeper, more solid, more permanent, and surer foundation than democracy.

"All this, however, has in itself, I am aware, a theoretic ring. To bring it back to actuality, then, I should like to cite the realities upon which aris-

tocracy seems to me to be based. If the best-laid plans of men go agley because of human weakness and imperfections, I can hardly cite more relevant realities for the starting point of any scheme than just these weaknesses and imperfections. It is upon a calculation of these realities that aristocracy is based.

The greatest of them is, perhaps, the one we have just considered in another light — the impermanence of generous motives as compared with the constant and inevitable pressure of selfish motives. If we are to have government — and I suppose that we all contemplate government in our schemes — some one must attend to its administration. Government is hardly a simple task that can be done offhand. It must contemplate the whole range of complex human relations that hold within the wide scope of a nation. And if just and equitable action is hard to attain to in single instances, as it is shown to be daily in the law courts where the circumstances are simple and defined, the just and equitable administration of the far more complex affairs of a whole people will require a great and penetrating wisdom.

“To meet this demand an aristocracy — I speak of the accomplished fact, for aristocracy is the result of slow and natural adjustments, not of deliberate plan — provides selfish motives for those who train themselves for the arduous duties and responsibilities of government. It gives them honour, rank, title, wealth, leisure, and it gives them freedom to pursue the widest variety of individual aspirations. For this class the public interest is its private interest. To maintain its privileges it must train itself to

maintain its power. And since in the nature of the case the members of this class are few, it must maintain its power by qualities of mind. They become a specialized class whose business it is to govern, and to cultivate those finer aptitudes and perceptions and appreciations which are necessary to the understanding of the varied interests and relations with which they have to deal.

"I know that there is something exasperating in this frank manner of putting my case — that aristocracy builds upon the sordid realities of human self-interest. It seems to try to take the wind from the sails of criticism. None the less I have fallen into it because it seems to me to grow out of the reality of the situation. I should, I think, rather be ashamed of it if it were but a device of my argument. But in the mixed quality of human affairs I see in this unlovely reality of human selfishness at least the virtues of permanence and stability — virtues imperative in solid foundations. Aristocracy, however, justifies itself, not upon the basis from which it builds, but upon the quality of the product at which it aims. It is because I believe that an aristocracy has a higher aim than a democracy, and has a more reasonable chance of accomplishing its aim, that I believe in the aristocratic order of society. Let me then try to justify myself by explaining this aim and this reasonable hope of its accomplishment.

"Out of the selfishness of these underlying motives, and out of the leisure and training which they provide, it seems to me reasonable to suppose that a finer product can emerge than is possible in a régime in which everyone has to divide his interests, and

having to make his way by some narrower pursuit, must devote time and interest to it that might be devoted to the larger cultivation of his mind. This statement sounds harsh, I know. It is harsh. But I think it is simply the harshness of truth. It is possible to doubt, I suppose, whether this concentration upon the wider interests, the larger relations, of humanity will produce a more perfect understanding of them. Yet I believe that none of us do doubt it. Even the humanitarians have assumed the principle that specialization makes for a more perfect understanding and greater ability in those whom he would train for more intelligent labor. It is but logical to suppose that a body of people who can be relieved of other necessities and can thus devote themselves to this wider discipline will attain to the qualities it aims at more perfectly than those whose discipline is divided.

"It is perhaps more reasonable to doubt that this particular type of attainment is a nobler thing than that of the dual discipline of a democracy. Yet I believe that you have no real doubts even here. You believe that to grasp the wider relations of life requires a finer type of mind. At least in every organized activity or trade you put the finer mind at the head where the larger relations have to be mastered and governed, and you consign the individual tasks to the simpler minds. If this is so — if we do feel this larger grasp to be the nobler thing — I think that it is not unreasonable to suppose that a system which disciplines its rulers to a more perfect grasp of this nobler thing and tends to make their ideas prevail will produce a more perfect civilization.

This is the end proposed for itself by an aristocracy. This is the attainment upon which it rests its justification.

“Certainly we could hope for such an attainment if other things were equal. But it is the aristocratic belief that other things are not equal, and that that inequality is in favor of the aristocracy. In the large it is said to be the biological tendency for kind to reproduce kind. If this is true, then those who in the slow evolution of an aristocracy have become by qualities of mind members of the ruling class will tend to reproduce others of the same kind. But I should not hold to this. It may be after all that by gifts of birth one class is much like another. Even so, however, the subtle influences that surround a child born to this class can not in a sense but familiarize him from birth with the broader and nobler type of consideration. And when we know that this child, whose thoughts from the cradle have been formed on these broader lines, is put for many years through a formal discipline on these same lines, we may expect from the class to which he belongs, made up of others of the same training, a higher type of accomplishment than could come from the general mass of the democracy whose training has perforce been divided. It has specialized, so to speak, on the noblest range of human thought, prompted in a large sense by the same motives that drive the citizens of a democracy to specialize on narrower lines. And so I think we may expect from it the cultivation of a finer product.

“I know that this contemplates a corresponding restriction upon the rest of the people of an aris-

tocracy. But an aristocracy looks to degree and not to quantity. If it were possible to add the wisdom of two men together, or of a million men, as it is possible to add their strength or their wealth, then a class might be wiser than its ideal teacher, Plato's disciples wiser than Plato, as a regiment is stronger than its colonel; and a democracy might be wiser than an aristocracy. But faculties of the mind are a matter of quality, not of quantity, and no amount of lesser degrees added together can equal the attainment of a single mind cultivated to a higher degree.

"There is, then, to stimulate this high degree of attainment, the strong motive of self-preservation, or class preservation. And there arises, too, out of this situation a class consciousness by which a code is established — a code of manners, of honour, and of intellectual attainment. In following this code a man may have no higher motive than to identify himself with his class, but this motive is, I believe, one of the most powerful known to men. The devil of loneliness has us all in his grip, and moves us, through the devices of speech, or dress, or badge, or manner, or attainment, to proclaim our affiliations — to cry out to all the world that we belong.

"Collectively for the aristocrat there is the need to keep this code purified and elevated, both because successful policy is founded on clear thinking and sound principle, and because pride of place and self-respect are most permanently founded on solid grounds. Stimulus to develop, coupled with opportunity to develop, and these joined to a select public opinion that gives a high aim to that development, and all this disjoined from any need to truckle to

the untrained simply because they are many and powerful — these influences, I believe, will make for a higher degree of attainment than the influences that hold in a democracy.

"I am not without my own smile at the colors of this picture that I have drawn. None the less I have laid them on wittingly, believing that they paint certain tendencies that do not exist, or do not exist in so high a degree, in a democracy. I can not see in the democratic theory provision for just these ends which to the aristocrat are the noblest aims of society. And in the democratic reality about us it seems to me that as we recede farther and farther from the aristocratic tradition there is less and less provision and less and less concern for these ends.

"In a democracy it is the average that obtains rather than the best. For a time after its foundation, while the aristocratic respect for the best still tinges the habitual thoughts of the many, they try to elevate to positions of trust those who by quality and training are recognizable as superior. But as time goes on and the many realize more and more their own will and their own power, they grow mistrustful of a superiority which they do not understand. And they put into power those who, they believe, more nearly resemble themselves — or more likely and worse, the clever and unscrupulous who can flatter and deceive them into such a belief. Then, as they see the corruption of the incompetent or unscrupulous whom they have elevated into office, they refuse to take it as an evidence of their own unwisdom, but come more and more to mistrust the

institution of representative and deliberative government. They demand that legislators and executives cease acting on their own wisdom and become the automatic mouthpieces of the popular will. In time they go still farther and demand the count of noses in the recall and referendum. At this stage they have ultimate assurance that the ideas that are enforced shall be the spontaneous average of the wisdom of the community.

"Now it is inevitable that this average shall be less elevated, less wise, than the best — even than the best existing in the community. For the community may be supposed to contain the normal range of humanity, from high to low; and averages are inevitably lower than the highest. If democracy is the expression of the average it is the establishment of mediocrity. Democracy is mediocrity. It is so by its own theory.

"I can think of no injustice deeper or more sweeping than the condemnation of a whole people to the levels of mediocrity. It is inbreeding. It forms a vicious circle. Youth grows up to it. The education of the masses responds to it. Literature and art cater to it. And these influences in turn intensify it. The finer minds must sink toward it or be without influence. As I look about me at the democracy I see only confirmations of this belief. I see less and less concern for the nobler thoughts and attainments of the past, more and more catering of the school to the lower wants of the people, more and more popularity for mediocre books and mediocre plays. Mediocrity is in the saddle. It rides roughshod over the finer aspirations of those who are, as many

are, above the average; it tramples the nascent possibilities of many who might, by inborn traits, rise to the nobler levels of thought; it destroys the fineness of the spectacle of life for those who are born to inferiority. It is a ruthless swashbuckler among the refinements of life. It is a tyranny.

"An aristocracy justifies itself, not primarily on personal grounds, but upon the belief that the ideas which it makes prevail are finer and more elevated ideas than the average ideas — not the ideas of mediocrity but the ideas of the best. It believes that the reaction of these prevailing finer opinions upon the community is in reality a more elevating and nobler influence than that of the opinions of the democracy — that it tends to create a finer populace. It establishes standards. It raises the whole people.

"In the ideal organization of an aristocracy, with its classes below the governing class in nice gradation from the bottom upward, every function of society would tend, by virtue of specialization, to be performed more perfectly. Is this hard upon those below the top? If it is, still here is the striking point — that we have the spectacle of such an actual gradation in the democracy about us. It seems harsh indeed to recognize such subordinations by law; but the reality remains the same. And the aristocratic condemnation of every man to a particular range of development — reprieved in cases of exceptional ability or promise — has personal compensations in the more perfect discipline which it involves. Happiness is not the result of particular definable circumstances, but of the nice adjustment to circumstances.

"No actual aristocracy, moreover, has been so rigidly organized that exception has not been possible where unusual ability has made an actual maladjustment. Chaucer's father, they say, was a liquor dealer; Woolsey's was an Ipswich butcher. Even Plato's ideal organization made provision for such shifts. And so, however harsh the aristocratic scheme sounds in cool exposition, there is some reason to believe that in the attainable reality there would emerge a higher average quality, a greater personal happiness, and perhaps a surer elevation of talent and genius, than is prevalent in a democracy.

"Your ruthless aristocrat, building thus not solely upon an ideal, but trying to get the best out of humanity as he finds it, with its conflicting weaknesses and aspirations, sees another fact in the reality before him that relieves his possible compunctions. He sees that the wants and needs and aspirations of the great mass of the people — to omit those exceptions of which I have just spoken — correspond strikingly with the position to which aristocracy would condemn them. They might, and no doubt would as they do even now, rage in personal resentment against the asserted superiority of those who were above them; but they do not want the qualities that create that superiority. They want what they now have, only in greater quantity; and it is to this that aristocracy would condemn them.

"In looking into the evidence of this dark saying, I come to the most painful part of my defense. I know, however, that you will forgive my bluntness. You smiled when I began by saying that aristocracy was a lost cause unless it could win to its aid the

forces of humanitarian sympathy which are the determining influences of the time. Well, they *have* come to its aid. The training for vocation which they would substitute in the schools of the democracy in place of the literary studies is just the training that genuine aristocrats, if they had their way, would force upon the many as the quickest means of creating their aristocracy.

"The aristocrat believes, let me repeat, that the best form of society is one in which every part is trained to fill its own niche and perform its own function — one man a shoemaker, another a farmer, and so on throughout — and at the top those whose training has been broad enough to enable them to see widely the whole field, and control the relationships between the specialized parts. It is, to repeat the comparison from your own practice where you are really concerned for the fineness of the product, the organization of the factory. The method to that end, in the slow, imperceptible growth of aristocracy, would be to train a farmer to be a farmer, a mechanic to be a mechanic, and so on throughout, displacing with instruction to that end the wider discipline which would tend to direct his mind to larger and more universal matters. The more narrowly is he limited to a training for the one niche which he is to fill, the more snugly will he fill that niche, and the more will he be dependent upon that niche for his place in the social scheme. He will fit no other niche. He will be fixed in that one place. He will be subordinated to those who, disciplined to a comprehensive view of the whole, will have the direction of the whole. Vocational training is a 'training for

that end. It is *par excellence* the aristocratic education."

He paused for a moment after the heated flow of his talk, and when he resumed it was in a quieter tone.

"You have felt, I think, that the aristocratic ideal is heartless. And yet I believe that it may claim for itself all the sympathy which the humanitarians claim as the basis of their modifications of the schools. The humanitarians would act in sympathy with the wants and needs and aspirations of the many, and consulting them find that they want and need and aspire to those things which vocational training can bring them. The aristocrat too would respond to just those wants and needs and aspirations. He believes them to be genuine. He believes that the mass of the people are right even though they do deceive themselves by calling this demand for vocational training democratic. They have a way of calling what they want by names which they like. It is a flattering deception, but it does not alter the facts.

"If they want democracy they must want the general spread of those qualities of mind which make for a wide grasp of the relationships which hold within the broad range of a whole people. But they do not want those qualities. And their instinctive wants are right. They know, if not reflectively yet definitely and instinctively, that they are not fitted for those larger views of life demanded of those who control and those who create and encourage the finer products of the human spirit.

What they want, as we have but now been told, are things of the body. What they are able to appreciate are jobs and things measurable in money. They have no fitness and no desire for those things which the literary studies of the older education aimed at. Not all, there are many noble exceptions, but in general. They have tried them in their first reaction against aristocracy, asserting that the essence of democracy was the universal right to those things which the aristocracy had reserved for itself. But they have not really wanted them — the things themselves. And as they have come farther and farther away from the impulse of reaction, and have realized more and more their freedom to have what they really want, they have chosen according to their kind, chosen the things which they had before, chosen the things which a ruling class would give them again.

“Incidentally they have justified the aristocratic contention that a permanent democracy is impossible — that the movement of democracy, after its first spiritual reaction, is inevitably toward the cultivation of its lower needs. It disguises these needs in elevated phrases. It speaks of the dignity of labour. It proclaims the equal worthiness of all necessary tasks. It idealizes a standard of living. And it settles itself to the systematic gratification of its sensuous wants, leaving the cultivation of the spirit again to the few. Insensibly thus, amid the shouting of its old sacred words, which have little by little lost their old meaning, it slips back into the control of those who have cultivated their general intelligence.

"It looks back to the founders of the democracy from whose ideas it has defected — its Washingtons and its Hamiltons — and calls them aristocrats because their idea was to spread to everyone the ideals that had before been the possession of the aristocratic few. It chooses for its present leaders those who assert the rightness and nobility of its own tendencies. They hasten its progress in the way it is going. Once it has become self-conscious of its own desires, hearing them put into words by its leaders, it puts them into accelerated effect in its training of the young. This is the decisive step.

"In the end the thing to do is to do nothing. Aristocracy springs from evolution, not from revolution. The democracy by its own will, though blindly and in self-deception, is bringing about the end which the aristocrat desires. It is training its children to take definite niches in the social scheme by limiting the training of their intelligence to the narrow range of specialized tasks. It calls this training "education," believing by hearsay that education is the bulwark of democracy. It has forgotten that when this truth was uttered the word *education* meant the broad training of the intelligence by those disinterested studies which direct the mind toward the larger relations of men. And going forward in this blind and mistaken faith, it is narrowing the outlook of its children by centering their attention upon a narrower and narrower range of ideas as they reform the schools more and more on vocational lines. It does, indeed, soothe its conscience by giving them incidentally a superficial smattering of many things of the higher order — language, government, his-

tory, sociology — but its heart is not there. They emerge with a false sense of having mastered what only a long and dire discipline can give them the foundation of; and their shallow, jejune, and confident utterances but confirm the belief that that little had best been unlearned. Gross ignorance is not so insidious. Still the thing to do is to do nothing. This training not only fits them better to their little niches, but it makes them content. It is better than the Roman way of keeping them quiet with bread and circuses. Instead of being a drain upon the treasury it gets work out of them, and increasingly efficient work.

“Such is my defence. And if in the end I find myself shoulder to shoulder with the humanitarian, whose gentle and generous sympathies have won us all, I should like to share in the approval which those sympathies command. Though I have proved my partisanship by another route I have come to the same conclusion in the end. I believe that an aristocracy would make for a happiness far more real and permanent than does the present order of society. The unrest, the uncertainty as to where one belongs, the chagrin at finding oneself too near the top of the table, the offensiveness of those clamorous to assert their equality, the elevation of the unworthy, the vaulting ambition that o’erleaps itself, the unskill that finds no joy in labour, the precariousness of the disinterested pursuits, the absence of organized encouragement for the nobler activities of the spirit — all these causes of unhappiness aristocracy would tend to reduce. It would have its own tendency to self-indulgence and the

relaxation of its exigent standards. But there would be its own selfishness to spur it on to the only means it would possess for maintaining its own power and privilege — the cultivation of the mind to a genuine superiority.

“From such a class, setting standards of taste and intellect, the better products of art and literature could be assured of encouragement which the democracy seems less and less inclined to extend. If truckling there were, it would be a truckling to minds that were trained, not to minds that were untrained, to a class with cultivated standards, not to a mass with no standards. The leaders of the nation, looking down from an assured position, would no longer have to call things by wrong names to win the suffrage of the ignorant — would no longer call ability to read, literacy; apprenticeship, education; glibness about art, culture; governmental aid to private interests, democracy. Spades would be spades, and the implements of thought, words, could retain their real value to the rescue of clear thinking.

“For these reasons and for many more I believe in aristocracy. And in this belief I cast my vote with the humanitarians in favour of that training of the people to vocation, which marks the final departure from the democratic ideal, and the inception of the aristocratic evolution.”

He ceased, and they sat staring at the fire. The host glanced at the humanitarian and read in his face, perhaps out of his own mind, a chagrin that contained no resentment, but no less a chagrin, that pulled at the corners of his mouth, and held his eyes in brooding concentration upon depths far within

the glow of the fire. He had a fleeting sense that the aristocrat had been too hard upon his gentle victim, followed by a surer sense that nothing but a love of fair play could have led him to impress so harshly upon the generous humanitarian the deception by which he was guided.

The pause which followed was so painful that when the moment of precipitancy was past the host turned to the democrat of the older school. It was understood by now that they were to have it out from all sides.

"Will you let me," he began somewhat briskly, relieving the tension of the moment by his dry, driving manner, "will you let me state my whole case even though it covers ground that has been trod more than once to-night? There will be an appearance of repetition, but there will also, I think, emerge differences that can best be detected in their logical setting. And these differences are the bent of the twig.

"As to my own plea, then — curiously I have found myself, as I have listened to the defence of the humanitarian movement and the defence of aristocracy, more often agreeing with the aristocrat than with the democrat — with his logic I mean. Yet curiously again, in the end it is they who are partisans and I who stand alone. The alignments are strangely complex.

"I am democratic in my social faith. I too believe that the constant character of democracy is its opposition to the aristocratic suppression of the masses. I have, therefore, no love for aristocracy,

but I believe that it had among its evils some very real virtues. It accepted responsibilities. My criticism of aristocracy, even if I could approve its fundamental theory, would be of its human tendency, from which democracy is not free, to self-indulgence. If we are, therefore, as has been said, to compare attainables with attainables, I need not, I think, cite specific examples to show that revolts against attainable aristocracies have taken place because of their tendency, in spite of the selfish interests that make in the opposite direction, to relax the rigours of their discipline and indulge their personal and more selfish inclinations. The results of such self-indulgence seem to me so much worse, so much more unjust, in an aristocracy than in a democracy that I must, though I had no counter-theory of my own, side with the latter. I must defend myself, then, by examining the grounds of this partisanship. Let me go hastily over the preliminary commonplaces.

"We commonly speak, I know, of a man's doing himself an injustice. Yet I think we attach a very different moral value to such an act from that of an injustice to some one else. It is this difference which moves me in the comparison we are now concerned with. That privilege should go with responsibility as reward of work is just enough. That privilege should mount at the expense of work, as in the aristocracy from which we have broken, is natural enough. Its consequences would be even tolerable if the ones who attained the privilege paid the cost. In an aristocracy, however, with every decline in the sense of responsibility the common people are the ones who pay with suffering, and with every increase

in self-indulgence the common people are the ones who pay with contributions and exactions. That is why, on the whole, a democracy is fairer and juster than an aristocracy. For though a democracy is not free from the same human weaknesses it has to suffer the penalties itself. Though in both cases it is, I know, simply individuals who suffer, I have not made a distinction quite without a difference. For in a democracy those who suffer have power of redress. Whether they use their power is not the point. Democracy gives it to them, and aristocracy withholds it.

“There is another injustice in an aristocracy even more serious than the first; and this brings me to the main premise of my argument. By the theory of its organization it distributes privilege and responsibility by the accident of birth, and in the same process passes over all those who by the same accident are born among the mass of the people. That kind tends to reproduce kind is a principle that one is, I think, at liberty to doubt in the delicate matters of mental and moral aptitude. Great men have not normally had great sons. Even our aristocrat has said that England’s great men have emerged from the classes below the top; and if this is true of greatness I think we may suppose it equally true of lesser degrees of human value. A system, then, that in any way tends to limit or curtail or suppress the very thing for which human organization may be supposed to exist — the cultivation of all attainable human values — seems to me to be mocking itself with contradiction. An aristocracy does, by its own theory, exert such limitation.

"Even the large social loss of this suppressive action might be borne with nothing more bitter than regret if it did not involve something far more intolerable. I mean injustice. I am grateful to our humanitarian for that passage in which he spoke of the individual as the largest conscious entity of which we are aware, and the largest unit which could rejoice or suffer or have aspirations. For when we look at society minutely we find that the moving thing, the thing that touches our hearts most nearly, is the individual man. And though we may give names to classes of people, and talk of them coldly, we have, when we come to the individual, come to the final goal where justice or injustice has its reality and stirs our eager approval or our burning resentment. And the mass of the people is made up of these appealing individuals no less than the ruling class.

"When therefore we look at the people as individuals, possessed of dreams and desires and longings and hopes for all those things which men have thought worth striving for — honours, distinctions, knowledge, wisdom — the injustice of thwarting in all but a few these noble aims that are common to all men seems repugnant to every democratic soul. One irreducible individual would seem to have as strong claim upon opportunity in his brief life as another. Accident has brought him here or there. He has but one chance at life. And to thwart that chance arbitrarily, on no basis intrinsic to the occasion, is to commit a bitter and irreparable injustice.

"It is the stirring sense of this injustice that has

roused men from time to time in all ages to fight for democracy against aristocracy. It was the sense of this equality of right to opportunity that produced our own Declaration of Independence, smiled at so superiorly to-day, and which led our fathers to rebel against a tyranny that seemed to deny it. This, then, was the democratic idea, the impulse that has ever stirred generous spirits to rebel against the arbitrary repression of the people — *to spread to everyone the opportunities that in an aristocracy are the privilege of the few.*

"This was the essential aim of our democratic revolution; but it was based on an idea still more fundamental. It was belief that the people wanted these opportunities and were worthy of them that supported the heroic protest which lay at the founding of the democracy. For given a people known not to care for those nobler ends which universal opportunity opens to them, or known to be too deeply sunk in their own sensuous wants to be worthy of generous self-sacrifice, and who would turn a finger to secure democracy for them? The democratic faith is not that a base people should in justice have what they want, but rather that our particular people are a people of noble aspirations and should not be thwarted of their liberty to develop the nobility that is in them. Democracy is at bottom a faith in the nobility of the people. Not that by the wildest dream all the people of a democracy could be expected to desire those nobler ends, but that the essential democratic action is to give everyone a chance — and a chance at those things that only the few had before. Not that all will

want them, but that the whole mass is leavened by those who do.

"I pause at this point, for here I have diverged from the conclusions drawn by that modern humanitarian sympathy that has such an appeal for us all. I have diverged, because my own sympathies are not so unqualified. They are for the individual, it is true, but not for the individual in all his wants, high or low. They are for the individual in his aristocratic deprivations. As democratic sympathies they must be for the individual deprived of particular things. There could be no democratic point in a sympathy for wants that were already fulfilled. Democracy must feel for wants that were denied. I can conceive a sympathy for the man in all his wants and needs and aspirations, but I cannot believe that that is democracy. I know that such is the current and popular definition — that democracy is the government that expresses the will of the whole people, no matter what that will. But such a definition can hardly be wholly true. Something in our right definition must reside in the nature of the will. For if, for example, — I take not impossible suppositions — the will of the people should be to establish an aristocracy or to enthrone a ruler, we could hardly call the will or the act which carried it out democratic. The will of the people must be of a particular kind. Something in our definition of democracy inheres in the nature of the ideas upon which the people act.

"The essential nature of those ideas, then, the nature which makes them democratic, I can conceive to be only this — that a noble people aspire to noble

things of which they have been deprived; that this deprivation is unjust; and that the distinctive democratic action is the opening up to their attainment, not of the things which they had before — there would be no point to that — but of those things which an aristocracy had closed to them. Such, as I conceive it, is the essence of the democratic faith.

“With this animating idea in mind, then, I should like to make some applications and defences which I believe are not impertinent, before I go on to what I may call the practical necessities of democracy. Our humanitarian has spoken of the schools as the principal agent in the dynamic expression of democracy. I suppose it is the schools that give the most effective expression to whatever political philosophy holds among a people. I can see no other point for governmental schools. And but now, as our friend traced the aristocratic influence of the vocational schools, the sense of their power intensified my own conviction as to the kind of discipline the democracy would needs establish if it wished to remain a democracy.

“In the aristocratic régime, with the masses of the people held to their places in the grand hierarchy, the severest deprivation and the bitterest injustice lie in the restricted range of their education. Specialized by a ruling class to insure in them the greatest amount of efficiency and to get out of them the greatest amount of work, they are limited in the range of their finer human possibilities by the narrowed bounds in which their growing minds are exercised. No aristocracy, to be sure, ever quite wholly enforced such restrictions, but the tendency

was in that direction, and to the degree to which it succeeded was due the generous force of the democratic protest and reaction. In the pursuit of its own ideal, then, the democracy established schools to spread to all, to the degree to which they wished to take advantage of it, the opportunity to gain this larger and more comprehensive vision which was before the opportunity of the few. It opened up to them the wider ranges of thought; and gave them the chance to be more than the half-men they had been. Democracy for its own part has never succeeded wholly, but its attempt has been in this direction; and the degree to which it has succeeded has been the degree to which it has justified its ideal as against the aristocratic ideal.

"It opened up to them history, and the facts and significance of human experience. It opened up to them literature, and the facts and significance of the dynamic traits of human nature. It opened up to them language, and gave them access to the thoughts of other peoples. If these revelations had no practical bearing on the problems of making a livelihood, it was not the making of a livelihood that the people had been denied by an aristocracy. These revelations gave them something really democratic. They had the value of disinterestedness; they disciplined the democratic mind in a type of thought unbiased by the consideration of profit or of momentary advantage. They constituted a culture that lay at the base of the broadest and noblest development of the human spirit. They gave to the many the specific thing of which they had been aristocratically deprived. They did the particular thing which it had

been worth while to fight for, perhaps to die for, in the revolution which had made the democracy possible.

"In the older régime the people worked: they cooked, they sewed, they farmed, they sold goods over the counter, they kept books, they built houses, each man to his last. But the large expansion of their minds among the data of all humanity, and in the nobler ranges of disinterested thought, was nowhere provided for. For the democracy to give them vocational training, then, to train them to the narrow range of data and relations that inhere in a single trade or industry, with the aim of fitting them to make a living in that industry — for it, in other words, to give the people what they already had, only to intensify the narrow bounds of their interests by early specialization, and then by calling that training 'democratic' to soothe those simple minds untaught to detect the fallacies in ideas beyond the range of their special training, seems to me to be deeply false and deeply wrong.

"All this, done in sympathy with the wants and needs and aspirations of the people, may be a wiser, and juster, and finer thing than democracy. But such a sympathy is not democracy; it is sympathy. It is universal; it faces in every direction; it has no distinctive aim. As for democracy, I have tried to say what its aim is. It, too, is animated by sympathy with individual men, but it sympathizes with a particular variety of their needs — with the harshest of their deprivations. It tries to give them their human right to develop to the utmost their human possibilities.

"Yet perhaps I have been too hasty in my criticism. Perhaps, just as democracy is moved by a desire to spread the opportunity for spiritual development, humanitarianism is moved to spread material comfort. The plea for vocational training is open to such interpretation. It may in the end prove true that their wants and needs and aspirations are material; that the people are not fit for the training of their spirits. Such a belief may be well founded; but it is not a democratic belief.

"Have I, in all that I have said, been reading into democracy too spiritual an ideal? Have I been ignoring the historic Stamp Act and the commercial impulses of our own Revolution? Have I, shielded from the bitter pressure of common needs, been speaking like a closet philosopher, imputing to the many, wants which they do not feel, and aspirations of which they have never dreamt? If I have I can see no point in democracy. For certainly democracy is not the agent best suited to material ends. A people fitted by exclusive training for particular tasks will become more efficient in industry and commerce. Efficiency is increased by division of labour and the specialization of the parts. Aristocracy, then, is the régime for that end, for aristocracy is more efficient than democracy. And no doubt the parts are even more physically comfortable, perhaps even happier, each fitted to its niche and rewarded according to its fitness. If our sympathies for the physical welfare of the parts predominate, then this specialization is the course our action will take. We will make our schools vocational. We will train our masses to special trades.

We will discipline them in material efficiency. But we shall not be acting on the democratic principle. We shall, as was said, be drifting toward aristocracy.

"If a man were only an animal, then his physical ease would be enough. But he is a man. And it seems to me that democracy has no point save as it does something that an aristocracy cannot do for the distinctively humane part of him — for his spirit. I think it is not to be questioned that a youth trained in the schools to be a farmer will be a more efficient farmer than one who has spent the time of that training in history and Latin and mathematics. Yet some price must be paid for spiritual development. And I can see no distinctive idea in democracy unless it is that to give to everyone some degree of spiritual development is worth the price of lesser material efficiency, even a lesser physical comfort. Such, I believe, is the animating idea of democratic education. I can conceive no other.

"I have come midway in my defence. I have described what seems to me the ideal that animates and justifies the constant democratic reaction against the aristocratic tendency, and determines the distinctive purpose of the democratic government. And I have applied this principle to the schools established to accomplish and to perpetuate the democratic ideal. My position may have seemed arbitrary. One of you on behalf of humanitarianism has said that the people do not want the broad development of their spirits, and the other on behalf of aristocracy has said that they do not want it. Both have affirmed that they want what the aristocracy has always condemned them to, — jobs and

the lower offices of life. As a democrat, however, I have no ground to take but a belief that the humanitarian and the aristocrat are wrong. I disagree with you, arbitrarily perhaps, but the point is one upon which whatever position one takes, whatever way one faces, he does so arbitrarily. He takes his ground on the basis of a spontaneous judgment. Democracy is a faith. I may have reasons which to me seem sufficient; but in the last analysis I know that I have taken my ground, as you have taken yours, by virtue of a faith that is in me.

"If I may be allowed this faith, then, what I go on to say will, I think, seem reasonable. I have come to the consideration of democracy as a practical thing. An ideal is futile without practical action. Democracy is not only an ideal; it is a government. This may be a commonplace, but its truth was nowhere recognized in the exposition of the humanitarian régime. Aristocracy and democracy both provide in those who rule a discipline which trains their minds in the broader relations of men. Industrial humanitarianism fails to provide for the administrative wisdom of its rulers. The affairs of a democracy must be carried on, and they must be carried on by somebody. Somebody must have the necessary wisdom. And wisdom lies only in men's minds. Since in a democracy, therefore, its majorities are responsible, it must discipline these majorities in the kind of wisdom which makes for administrative effectiveness, and effectiveness in the democratic direction.

"The relationship between the discipline of these majorities and the democratic government is too

obvious to need more than passing illustration. Upon the quality of the discipline which gives them their judgment and taste will depend the quality of the men whom they elect to office, the quality of the laws which they enforce, the quality of justice, the nature of the public policy, the kind of literature encouraged by their reading, the type of life encouraged by their example, the quality of the theater, the quality of the arts, the quality of scholarship endowed and encouraged, the beauty of the cities, the grace of social life. Above all, upon the kind of discipline by which their judgment and taste have been determined will depend the very discipline itself by which that judgment and taste are to be perpetuated in their children.

"That is why the schools are a governmental institution. In so far as they have any point in the practical workings of a democracy they have it by virtue of their service in disciplining the majorities of a democracy in the kind of wisdom needed to guide them in the democratic path. In this matter something may be learned from aristocracy. The aristocracy disciplines its governing class in the broader field. And though the problem of democracy has its striking differences from the problem of aristocracy, they are differences so far from relieving it of the necessity of jealously disciplining its citizens to a large and generous wisdom, that they cry loudly for a yet more rigorous discipline in that wisdom. One of you has mentioned the aristocratic disbelief in our ability to maintain this discipline. Democracy is, we may agree with him, immeasurably harder to maintain than an aristocracy. It has

a people trained to wider interests than the lower classes of an aristocracy, a people less compactly organized, more restless, more shifting. And to govern them it has no class set apart, trained to rule, stimulated by selfish incentives, rewarded by honor and privilege. As a problem, then, it requires a higher intelligence to solve, and those who disbelieve in it do so on the ground of a disbelief in the power of a whole people to make the necessary self-sacrifice and train themselves, at the expense of their private interests, in the type of learning necessary to the wise direction of affairs.

"But a belief in democracy is incompatible with this doubt. Democracy believes in the moving power of its ideal, and in the existence of a dynamic generosity in its people, or it is not democracy. It believes that these are sufficient to take the place of rewards and privilege and honor. A democracy must believe these things, for these beliefs *are* democracy.

"The second difference, already implied, is that, though the whole people are responsible for its welfare — its policies, its justice, its civilizing activities — they cannot be disciplined exclusively to meet these responsibilities. Each man has his private interests and duties calling him strongly, and he must bring up his children to similar conflicting duties. This conflict creates the fundamental problem of practical democracy, just as it creates, with specific variations, the fundamental problem of all government.

"The gist of the matter is then that these two types of interest clash, and that in a democracy,

with no governing class, everyone must make a sacrifice of private to public service. This sacrifice is the price of its democratic liberties. Moreover the respective disciplines for these ends conflict. Training for private interests has been explained to us. It is concentrated upon a narrow field, with the end in view of material returns. For the public interest the discipline must necessarily be broad and fundamental, with the end in view of habituating the mind to a disinterested perception of things as they are — of training the mind to think with clear judgments upon those data and those relations which hold, not in a single field but in all fields — not in a single task but in the comprehensive task of the whole nation.

“The need of this latter kind of discipline is sufficiently obvious. And I can find no logic that will let me conclude that training in the data and relations of a single trade will make for as broad and deep a wisdom as discipline in matters that lie at the base of all relations of a people — human nature, human thought, and human experience, as revealed in literature and history. Where else is the citizen to gain a large political wisdom? It was in this broad discipline that aristocracy trained its rulers. It trained them to no especial tasks, but by traditions founded upon a sense of the ends to be attained, gave them an education which informed them of the best that had been thought and done in the past by men in all countries and in all ages. It trained them to minute and careful thinking in this broad field. It did not teach them to farm their estates, or to make shoes or bridges, or to cook, but rather to control the large activities of the nation

"It may have failed. It is the democratic belief that it did fail. But if it failed, it failed not because it learned its large lesson too well but because it grew self-indulgent, and having power, abused its privileges and neglected its responsibilities. It failed because it did not learn its large lesson well enough. Somehow the democracy must learn those lessons which the aristocracy neglected. Somehow it must discipline its responsible majorities in that broad grasp of human relations which makes for administrative wisdom. That is the practical democratic problem of education.

"Democracy has no other practical object to serve in its schools than to solve this problem. If the people cannot specialize, after the manner of a ruling class, and can as a whole get but a part of that discipline at best, that would not seem a reason why that part should be done away with; rather a reason why it should be cherished and intensified to the utmost. Knowledge and wisdom are not the kind of thing that once attained can be handed down from generation to generation like heirlooms. They exist nowhere but in individual human minds, and to be maintained have to be re-created there from the ground up in every generation. As a consequence there can be no slackening of the educative process. Nowhere more than here is eternal vigilance the price of liberty. The practical needs of the democracy, then, coincide with the ideal needs, for the broader wisdom of which the people were deprived is the same wisdom that is needed for the government for which they are now responsible.

"Even more strikingly true is the converse of this

conclusion. In a democracy, where the citizens have private interests distinct from the public interest, the chief public danger lies in the over-development of private interests. Therein is the chief enemy of democracy. I need not point out in confirmation our trusts, our corporations, our municipal conditions, our lobbies. For the democracy, therefore, to suffer the lessening of that discipline of its citizens which is so necessary for its wise administration, is to break down its chief safeguard. For it further to accede to their selfish demands and substitute a training which makes in each man for an intensification of his own private interests, is a governmental action making directly and blindly for its own undoing. At one stroke it is removing the safeguard and strengthening the enemy.

"Democracy has no enemy to fear but itself. Government by the few has the eternal menace of the suppressed many. But government by the people need fear nothing but its own will. It may do what it pleases. It may insensibly change its desires; it may follow an altered will to the formation of a new régime. But if it desires to remain a democracy it must safeguard that desire. It must fortify itself against those selfish interests which everyone must possess, and which by democratic theory everyone should possess. It must by a liberal and disinterested discipline impart a generous conception of the spiritual idea of democracy, and impart the wisdom that is necessary to the wise administration of its affairs. The theory of democratic education, then, is that it should bring up its youths in that generous conception, strengthen their gen-

erous desire for its service, and train them in an ability to grasp and administer its affairs in harmony with that generous conception. For it, therefore, by direct and conscious action to weaken the discipline of that part of the man which serves the democracy, and by the same stroke to strengthen that part of him which conflicts with the democracy, is to make by far and deep reaching influences for its own destruction.

"I have said that self-indulgence, the use of public power to private ends, and the decline of the sense of public responsibility, have marked the downfall of aristocracies. Until a moment ago, however, I had felt a blind security for the democracy thinking that though the whole people might grow self-indulgent there lurked no enemy near to rise up in revolt against the evils of its decadence. I had not seen that though the democracy need fear no revolution it declines no less surely when the generous spirit of its own natal impulse dies. If in the end that spirit does die, it sickens first, like the spirit of aristocracy, at the entrance of self-indulgence. In the democracy about us there is evidence that the moment of sickness has come. There is the use of public power to private ends, the decline in the sense of public responsibility. Even the little time asked for discipline to public service is begrudged, and that time is turned over to private ends. Instead of self-devotion to public service, on the part of the many, the many are bending the public service to self-devotion.

"Still, though I am not blind to the discouragements of the moment, I have not lost my democratic

faith. I believe that, given a people of intelligence such as ours, it is possible to make a democracy nobler and juster than the aristocracy from which we have sprung, and toward which, as has been shown us, we are, alas, beginning to turn again. I do not think that it is too late to face about and pursue once more our own proper course. But whether we want to face about, now that we have tasted the poisonous sweets of self-indulgence, I do not know. One of you says that we do not; the other says that we do not.

"I believe that the one essential thing in the maintenance of the democracy is the broad discipline of its youths. And when I look at that discipline I see it gradually narrowing. I believe that the one enemy of democracy is the private interests of its people. And when I look about me I see that instead of strengthening its discipline to counteract the force of these interests the democracy is bending its discipline to their enhancement. When I search in obscure corners, hoping to find remnants of the disinterested pursuit of wisdom so necessary to democracy, I see it wholly dependent upon private generosity, retreating to private foundations. With the masses of the people narrowed in their education to particular tasks, and bent in the habits of their minds to an exclusive regard for their private interests; and with the few who are not so specialized disciplined — like an aristocratic class, by private endowment — in the broader learning that is needed for a grasp of the complex relationships of the whole, I can see only a slow trend toward aristocracy.

“Still I have not despaired. I believe that the democratic spirit may survive the stimulus of those oppressions from which it revolts, and may recover even from its present sickness. But I believe that it can survive only by the broad, disinterested discipline of its youths — a discipline which will take them when they are young and generous, give them the deep foundations of that nobler development of which in such moving numbers they were once deprived, habituate their minds to the disinterested outlook from which clear thinking and generous action spring, form them in the liberal wisdom of the ages, and teach them the wide relations between men, which lie at the base of a wise and moderate administration of the interests of their people.”

He ceased, and they sat again in silence, smoking and gazing at the fire. Two of the four of them, at least, were saddened by the thoughts of the evening — by the dangers which threatened the generous interests which they had so nearly at heart, and by the subtle and complex relationships which their oppositions and their no less disconcerting agreements had revealed. It was, therefore, with chastened spirits though with genuine warmth of friendship that they uttered the commonplaces of good-night.



V

IN PURSUIT OF THE ARTS

I. CUDGELS AND COMMON SENSE

IT was a revealing touch to our friend's quality that as he grew older it was his tolerance and not his crabbedness that should have increased. He grew more sociable, more dependent on the world, by virtue of the humanity that had always lain behind his militant front. The militant in him had leave to cool with the passing of years. It was still in reserve, indeed, as events showed, but it no longer went about with its sword drawn. He took more time now to go about, and more people dropped in on him for talk. In the circle about him it was said that he improved. He did; but he spoiled the effect of this comment for one informant by laughing that it came, after the manner of the world, only when he had stopped improving. Obviously he was still the ironic observer.

And he was observed. Acquaintances saw him one winter haunting the galleries and picture shops, an attractive figure, grown a little thicker with middle age, amenity in the slight stoop of the neck, and vigor in the erect shoulders. His face was brooding rather than animated, and only when the eyes were looking into yours did you catch the something lucidly human in him that was at once both boy and man. The eyes lingered, upon you

at the time, and afterward, when he had gone by, in your memory. It was said that women hated him for the truths he told, and still clung to him as a staunch friend.

His going about this winter among the show windows of Bohemia was a genuine quest. He was interested in beautiful things for their own sakes, as the phrase is, and that would have been enough. But it was characteristic of him that he should in a measure complicate whatever point of interest absorbed him; and his interest in art was thus complexly the ramification of something else. He was unable to take it simply, because for him its relation to that something else was its thrilling point. He had a passion for seeing life whole, for catching its proportions. His ancient grievance was that a fine sense of proportion was the rarest thing in the world — yes, in both senses.

When therefore after a certain autumn exhibition he had caught himself sliding into the seductive sunset land of æsthetic speculation and reading, he brought himself up with a sharp tug at the reins. Certain of his friends promptly rallied him for what they called his Puritanic uncomfortableness in the presence of beauty. He acquitted himself of such a charge, however, and with a good deal of good evidence. His discomfort came from another source. He found his ancient grievance against the confident hypocrisy of the five senses grumbling back into consciousness, like an old rheumatic wound. And if he could take it now a little more serenely, as time will inure its victims even to pain, still there were moments when it made him wince and cry out. And

if he did cry out now and then, so that his bare words, repeated, would sound harsh, one who was present and who had a grain of salt in him would have caught in the light of his eye and the tone of his voice the saving spark of humor that turned his railing complaint into but a negative way of picturing his own vision.

His temper, for all its amelioration, was the fighting one still, and the fighting temper perforce holds in a kind of tolerant contempt the passive enjoyments of peace. That is the peculiar angle from which its owner looks out upon the world. He will forever have his dragon to fight. And however much he values the palace, it will be upon the dragon at the gate that he demonstrates his devotion. To be content with the positive depiction of his notion was what, at the cost of peace, our friend therefore could not bring himself to. It was too tame a sport; it drew to itself too many of the slothful and the self-indulgent.

It was in part the spectacle, especially in the arts, of beautiful talkers who lived parasitically by fostering a cult, and the great horde who on their side responded to the flattery of it, that won his active disgust. But more particularly it was his old love of seeing life whole, of seeing it in measure and proportion, that sent him back characteristically to the center for a perspective. He could not escape from the sense that life was a matter of living and that the center was the conception of a decent life. It was there at all events that he took his perpetual refuge.

The literature he had just been through was an

amazing mass. It had no help for him at all. It had brought into its service a whole gamut of appeal — cleverness, eloquence, sentiment, gossip, and romance; and many kinds of treatment — æsthetic, scientific, historical, archæological, and metaphysical. But aside from a characteristic beauty of binding and print it was wonderfully barren. He was aware of thousands of honest painters, and sculptors, and musicians struggling at their work, Two or three he knew, at home and abroad, and one who had won fame in two continents. But they were silent — talkative enough at night in the studio with glasses clinking — but silent and hard-working over their brush or chisel or score. And they had a kind of tacit hate for the great horde of cult mongers.

“Don’t you read the literature of your subject?” he had asked one of these friends one day as they lounged through the Louvre.

The other looked at him quizzically for a moment before he replied, and then, — “Certainly — here,” he said, and his hand waved at the walls of the Salon Carré. In a moment he added, “Biography, of course, and history. You belong to your own metier, and you want to know it from the bottom. But the rest —” He gave a gesture that together they had seen and loved in an excursion they had taken together in old days into Bohemia — the geographical Bohemia — a wringing of the hands on wilted wrists, that pointed utter though whimsical despair. They laughed the quiet laugh of old memories.

At the moment our friend had put the painter’s

disgust down to the worker's characteristic intolerance of the theorist. But now, after a long dive into the luke-warm seas of this literature, he wrung his own hands in the Bohemian pantomime. It was of a piece, for the most part, with a mass of stuff about literature — "Dante's Vision," "Wordsworth's Nature," "Browning's Philosophy"— for those who wanted to shine among the ignorant without the intolerable trouble and boredom of reading the original. And if he had found the literary pabulum thin and sickly, tricked up with sentiment and mystic emotion, he found the artistic pabulum yet worse, with the greater license of the vaguer subject. He had independently a vigorous sense of meaning for the words *spirit* and *soul* or he would have retreated from this literature with a hardened loathing for both. As it was, the words *insight* and *message* were forever spoiled for him.

His criticism of this literature, apart from his personal disgust, was that it wrought itself up entirely within the circle of its own substance — that it failed to anchor itself in the charted waters of the general consciousness and went drifting off into the chimerical seas of its own romantic dreams. Well, that was just what he hated.

Among his friends was one whom he liked with unreasoning affection, ignoring differences which in anyone else would have been irritating and repellent. With youth, and a dark, handsome Spanish face, a serious but not humorless concern for the gentler matters of life, and a gift of expression that had tempted him into poetry with justifying results, this friend surprised those who knew his type and per-

ceived his vogue with a modesty that sometimes almost became humility. The most diverse acknowledged his charm. He was philosophical, æsthetic, epicurean, humanitarian, classic, satiric, romantic, stoic, by turns and in combination, reflecting the bent of his companions and his mood. He had a quick sympathy that could be roused by any appeal to his feelings, and an intensity of response, an ardor of approval, a self-effacement before the conquering idea, that led to the general agreement that the crowning quality of his charm was sincerity.

Our friend at first demurred at this verdict. In the end, however, he agreed. But he agreed with a discrimination that helped him later to probe to the human roots of his own philosophical leanings in this moot region of the feelings and the senses. Here was a type of sincerity that based itself on the emotions, and expressed itself in the kindling eye and fervid tones that in personal intercourse are the touchstones of genuineness. It differed, as the weathercock differed from the compass, from that other, uncompromising sincerity that offends all the world by sticking with stubborn conviction to one point. It arose out of a character that was at any moment all of one piece, one whose intellect never contradicted the feelings, whose lyric vein was so dominant that the reason was but the ready conjurer of expressions to clothe the emotions. It was a genuine sincerity, but it was the sincerity of the weather. It had no inner antagonism to cast doubts on its own consistency. It took life altogether passionately; its test of truth was the immediate

thump of the heart. Memory and reason, if they should have contradicted the passing emotion, would have been discredited as the creatures of an experience that was dead — valueless conservatives clinging with pathetic loyalty to the outworn conditions among which they had been born.

He saw, therefore, in this friend of his, a type — heightened indeed beyond the normal run of men, but so much the more the type — of the modern man who had substituted the immediate for the remote, the æsthetic appeal for the moral principle, and who gave to art its conquering modern vogue — the man who had suppressed his inner duality. He saw in this suppression the elements of modernism — sincerity, enthusiasm, sympathy, a carelessness of the past, a rejection of tradition and authority, a ready response to the feelings, and an unlimited flow of reasons to justify the current emotion. And he saw in the aestheticism of his time a symptom of the malady of which he conceived culture to be sick.

Just now he was interested in art — our dualistic friend — and in his eternal pursuit he began pretty near the bottom. He began with the senses. The window at which he sat looked out on a quad hemmed in by Gothic buildings whose low eaves stemmed the tide of ivy that flowed up the many-windowed walls. Some gardener of old had set elms within the corners, and below his window a cherry tree had sprung up from a pit dropped in the grass by some unrecorded loungeur. As he sat now, looking out on the scene of which he never tired, two students, leisurely exceptions to the busy norm, lay in the shade of the early leaves and their lazy voices

came up to his open window. The moment won a lively response from him. He felt its perfection.

The point of his present distinction, however — he was always making distinctions — was that this was not all that there was to be said about it. There was something else in him beside and behind the sense of its external beauty, even behind his gratification at the sense of this beauty — something to which it reported. It was something that perceived, was gratified, and could be critically interested and amused by the process of automatic gratification. He knew that this pursuit might be endless without taking him very far, for he might always find an awareness in his mind that would envelop successively each preceding awareness, like those classes of classes of a certain modern school of mathematical logicians. But he saw that there was something gained by this process of going at least one step behind the simple, grateful sensations. He had a more masterly control over the allurements of them.

There were enough people around him who stopped at the first stage. With most of them, indeed, he had a hearty sympathy — frank, genial beings, the bulk and sinew of humanity, who ate and drank and golfed without pretense and without curiosity. He liked them. They made up the spectacle of life, the pathos and romance of its comedy. They were in both senses the hosts of the world, among whom the thoughtful were but the rare and suffered guests. The worst that he had against them was that in their idleness and leisure and unreflecting pleasantness they gave acclaim to a class of practitioners whose pretense was to be of

the reflective part of mankind, but who were in reality like themselves — merely sensational. He was thinking of the art-mongers. Against the art-mongers he had on principle a vigorous grudge.

Grudge was indeed a vigorous word, as he smiled to realize, feeling his own great love of the senses. His whole past was a web of brightly colored visions; he acknowledged his captivity to the marbles of Praxiteles, to the canvases of Leonardo; music haunted his reflective moments. In one sense he had a reputation for sensuousness that made him in some quarters disliked and mistrusted. He indulged his minor vices. Asceticism seemed to him a pretty poor virtue — a feeder of pride, a breeder of intolerance. He liked to find in others the humanizing touch of moderate indulgence, the community of the weed, the *gemüthlichkeit* of friendly beer, the sociability of wine. There seemed to him something weak in a too fearful avoidance of temptation, in the too sedulous care for the flesh. There it was, the flesh, gross perhaps, asking for beef and brew, but the ironic condition of there being a spirit. And he had not seen that his countrymen in denying it certain indulgence had made a nation notable for their spiritual attainment.

There seemed, indeed, a kind of frank safety in answering its demands by a mild and temperate dipping into the admitted vices. Their frank labels marked so well and so openly the dangers that hedged them in. The real peril lay in the subtle disguises by which a more recondite sensuousness passed itself off as something nobler. And herein lay his case against the arts. By calling themselves

something else they evaded the bounds of temperance, and by adroit labeling they secured the frank of those virtues that need no curb in a sensuous world.

He doubted, tentatively, whether the arts were altogether something else. He allied them offensively with the pleasures of the senses, exasperating humorless devotees, and making for himself the repute that he was not sensitive to the subtle appeals to the spirit. This charge was so easy to put upon him, and had illustrations of sensualists who did see nothing in art so pat to its hand, and won partisans so readily, that in most quarters denial was useless. None the less he uttered his heterodoxy for the sake of amusing experiences that invariably followed.

When put to it the devotees had little to say for the spirituality of art — little to say that they could say. What it did for them was, it seemed, something that they could not say. It did something unutterable. In the face of his amused smile it was exasperating for them to have nothing more in its defense than that they liked it, enjoying the sensations and emotions that it induced. It was no less exasperating to them that he could say as much for himself.

They did indeed maintain that there was something else behind — something spiritual, something indefinable because to the perception of it there was no other medium than the particular piece of art that had produced it — that each specimen of art conveyed a unique spiritual experience. In the safe elevation of such vagueness they were unassailable.

When in his vulgarity he suggested that mutton also conveyed a sensation that was unique and unutterable he did nothing but convince them of his grossness. To say that wine, too, elevated the spirit to conceptions that had no other means of access, and that all their claims for art applied exactly to his claims for sensuousness, was, they said, to take advantage of a duplicity of language, a pun, a poverty of the verbal medium. When he objected that language was at least infinitely less vague in the expression of ideas than any other medium, he was confronted by the assertion that the highest reach of language lay in its suggestiveness rather than in its simple and exact expression. He was referred to a thousand lyrics. The implication in this reasoning was that as language approached the arts in the vagueness of its signification it served to confirm the arts in their claim for significance.

They pointed out men — Walter Pater, for example — who had shown what definite ideas art could stimulate. There was his notable passage on the *Mona Lisa*. It was but a further exasperation to suggest that this definiteness — whatever these writings possessed — was the definiteness of language and required language for their expression — that Pater was a man of letters expressing in letters his own thoughts.

The worst was that he himself laid claim to participation in all that art had to offer. There was no mode of refuting him but by derision. It was clear enough that the inexpressible may have lain in him as well as in them. He had indeed sedulously visited the galleries of Europe, had spent

long days in Paris studios, and long nights in friendly wranglings with artists and art critics; he had worn thin underwear and shabby clothes in forced expiation for the purchase of beautiful pictures and costly rugs. But these evidences only served to make him out a traitor in his thoughts to what he owed so much to in fact.

He had long, indeed, given over such ill-natured bickerings. And on the whole the world is good humored and its memory is short. So it came about during this winter, with the sight of him in the galleries and the rumors of his pictures, that a naïve group of women invited him to address them on the subject of modern painting. He was tempted to accept, but the good angel of his amenity prompted him to send them first an outline of his points, and they found some reason for postponing the occasion indefinitely. It never came off, but the informal prospectus got about somehow to a wider circle than the address would have reached, and caused some fuming among the local representatives of Culture.

The matter was one of the kind that accumulates myths. The name of Art had not had a questioning breath breathed upon it in the local hearing, and the faintest whisper no doubt sounded like blasphemy. It certainly grew to blasphemy in rumorous repetition. Our friend was too well used to such misrepresentations to wonder at them, but in the more charitable mood of his middle years he felt less arrogant and more willing to explain — perhaps a little more anxious for sympathy. At all events he took the occasion of a local exhibit to send to a morning paper a criticism that might serve to ex-

plain the points he had made in the misunderstood and maltreated outline.

His hatred was of sham and of the wind-blown mists that had come to be the atmosphere in which art was breathing, and he hit harder than he quite realized. He counted on the amenity of common sense to dulcify his blows, and forgot, in the interest of making his ideas tell, that art had got lifted out of the reach of common sense.

There was a tempest. It took him by amaze, for his points had seemed to him obvious, but more because he would not have believed that the particular enemies he had aroused had the moral strength to be robustly angry. They were; and for a time life scintillated around him with stirring flashes of romance. He would have said that none now cared enough about matters of art and intellect to lose sleep over their battles, but he found that they did — two, at least.

For one March dusk, a week later, he discovered a pair of shadows following him, and near a deserted corner he was set upon with honest fists that had little token of decay. The pair were gallant enough to halt him and issue their challenge before they set to, and if they were two to his one they may have reckoned on his stout cane. He had the wall of them; and a good stick and a good arm are better than two men. He felt their fists before he felt the thrilling tingle of a blow of his own and saw one of them stagger. The other gave over and went to the aid of his companion, and half running dragged him away.

Our friend shook his arm. The feel of his blow

was in it, and the crushing fall of the stick, and it sickened him. He had a sudden sympathy for his assailants and for their anger and their attack. From their voices they were young and their wrath had been stirred over a principle and had kept hot for a week. All these things appealed to him. There were high spirits and high blood there. Neither then nor afterwards could he think of the attack as cowardly. He had the advantage to his generosity, as he smiled to reflect, of being the victor.

He said nothing of the affair, and never heard of it or of his assailants from outside. But he noticed, in writing again on the same subject, a more sympathetic note in his style. The personal contact, and the knowledge that what he had said had reached home somewhere — rare enough in his experience — touched him with a more intimate sense of the human aspect of his ideas. Years before, he would have called the change sentimental — the ultimate damnation of his youthful vocabulary. But he could smile now and indulge the gentler mood, knowing that a good deal of such softening might leave him still free from the repute of sentimentality.

His ideas did not change. He still hated the crude, dehumanized intellectualism that science was foisting on humane affairs, and he still hated the de-intellectualized emotionalism that had run mad in the arts. He had a vision of harmony — of judgments and motives born of a nice balance of all the faculties. What he saw about him was each faculty snatching up some part of life and running off with it to its own natural extreme.

"You forget," one of his friends remarked, "that this is the age of the specialist."

"Ah," he returned, "that is just what I can't forget — the age of one-sided judgments. You remember the Pretorian Guards. For a reasonable life we've got, don't you see, to keep the military subordinate to the civil power — to keep the specialist subordinate to the judgment that coordinates."

"You belong, then, to those modern philosophers who deny the difference of the faculties?"

Our friend smiled.

"So far from it!" he exclaimed. "For they too are tarred with the same stick. They see the reasoners running off to one extreme and they rush off to another. But if what they believed were so they would have no case against the reasoners or any others, for the reasoners would simply be using their one faculty, according to the formula. No, the thing is to distinguish clearly in order to proportion and harmonize — to be intellectual in order to be able to judge and restrain the emotions, and to have feelings that illuminate the intelligence — that is the balance I dream of."

"And what has that to do with the arts?"

"Ah, everything in the world," he returned.

II

SENSE AND THE SOUL

"You intrigue me, you artists," he said to his friend the poet, one late afternoon as they sat before the window, smoking as was their wont, and looking out on the spring that was invading the quad.

It was a grateful hour — the time of day when bodily energy has worn itself into fidgetless repose, and the mind, through with its pedestrian business, tries its wings; when silences are eloquent of peace, and filled with the moving mystery of deepening colors in earth and sky, and talk may touch itself with poetry and yet be but the nice prose of the moment. It was the time of year when memories go backward and with light touch cull out magic moments of childhood's wonder and content, or reflect upon old sorrows the mellowing beneficence of time.

It was at such hours and such seasons that the poet had come into the way of dropping in to spend the dusk in silence or in talk, or in both, as the moment went. To-day it was talk, perforce, for his host had not yet shaken off the world. The stains of his afternoon journey were still on his mind, and he was still brushing them off while his guest was composing himself in the window.

"I dare say," smiled his friend. "And these things have a way of being reciprocal. But what have we done now?"

"Nothing new. What you have always done —

taken a simple sensation and clothed it in awesome terms."

He reached to the table by his side and drew out a handsome volume from under a pile of handsome volumes.

"Here is a sample," he went on, turning to a marked passage. "Listen to its mystic phrases: 'Nothing but the rare strains of great music can reach the spiritual height of this half-seen, somber landscape.' Now in sober truth do you think that a picture can be spiritual, or the rare strains of great music? For my own part I think them very pleasant sensations. They seem to me to differ physically, but not philosophically, from the smell of orange blossoms or the taste of mutton."

The poet sat back in his chair, his eyes brooding on the lacy edge of the elm tree outlined against the sky.

"Gross!" he murmured at last, "oh, gross! Give and take, my friend, is the legend over the door of your mind. That is why some of us like to come here better than elsewhere. But gross!"

"None the less my question is fair," pursued his host. "I don't say that the taste of mutton stirs as pleasant reactions in me as the smell of orange blossoms, or that these in turn thrill me as Wagner's *Waldweben* never fails to do. I admit the grossness of mutton, but I should say that the matter is simply a gradation within the same field — sensations that we like or dislike in varying degrees."

"There you are," cried the poet. "You go grubbing like a mole in the cellarage. But you will never find it there, your answer. You must come

out into the sunlight. Don't you see that all your intellectual distinctions are underground burrowings, and that you won't find this natural thing, the spirit, in your darkened, artificial rooms."

"Your music, then, and your landscapes, and your lyrics — "

"Ah, of course they are artificial too. But don't you see where they lead you? Your thoughts, your reason, your logic, are all matters of symbols — symbols too of your own invention — a clever network between arbitrary fixed points. But your arts go direct to something else, to something native and spontaneous in you. There are gross pictures, and gross music, and gross verse. But there is a kind of music, and of pictures, and of verse that, as you say, are high in the scale of our liking. But the difference is more than that we like the one and not the other. For somewhere in the scale there is a subtle line beyond which there enters, in some degree, the element of beauty. And beauty is a perception of the soul."

"Why soul?"

"For no reason, I am afraid, that the reason can see. But in our intuitions we know that it exists, and we know it in the measure of our feelings, not in the measure of our logic. Do we have souls? With reason alone we should never have thought of such things. The perception is one of the emotions, and so I think we have a right to say *soul*. Your lover in mid-ecstasy is surer of a soul than your bank clerk in mid-career down a column of figures. And your poet striding the moor with the blast in his face is surer of it than when he is seated at his

typewriter making the last fair copy of his verse. And this perception of beauty is the soul in one of its essential exercises. What I fear for you, sir, whom I love beyond any of your kind, is that though you like certain sights and like certain sounds, you have none of that sense of beauty whose whisperings make you know that you have a soul."

"A soul," his host mused. "Yes, here we may talk freely. I like to go back to old out-fashioned discussions. And the soul is out-fashioned if anything is. Besides it is one of your characteristic words. It is a point I should like to clear up. I am really in earnest. So you must remember my underlying sympathy if I push you a little hard. For it seems to me that you and *your* kind stand at the very center of one of our modern weaknesses."

"I am fortified."

"Well, in this sense of beauty, and in the emotions that go with it and make you aware of the soul, tell me, is it just that thrill of feeling and nothing more that makes you call it soul?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that when you have an intuition of the soul, either you have simply the emotions that accompany beauty, and you call that emotion *soul*, or that emotion makes you aware of something else and you call that something else *soul*. And I want to know which you mean."

"Why, then, that something else."

"Ah, then what is that something else?"

The poet paused for a moment, and a slow, pleasant smile lighted his eyes.

"I know my answer won't satisfy you," he an-

swered, "for there you sit looking for it without, with cold eyes. And its very quality as soul makes it invisible from without. But I take your challenge. I should say then, that it is an intuitive consciousness of something within that responds to what we have called beauty."

"To beauty alone?"

"No, to beauty among other things."

"But you don't budge from the spot. If I should speak of an intuitive consciousness of something within me that responds to this wine, I suspect that you would refuse to call that something soul. But the descriptions are the same. And so I must ask you again for the distinguishing quality that makes the one *soul* if the other is not."

"If I speak," the poet returned, "I must speak of an intuition. An intuition is just what you will not allow."

"No," our friend protested, "my grossness does not go so far as that. I know that all the cunning in the world could not put into words the subtle aroma of a violet. But I know that it exists. That is a sensation, you say. But just there is my trouble. I cannot distinguish between what you have called intuition and the senses themselves."

"But the one is above the earth; the others are of it. The one lifts you out of yourself; the other is the response of the flesh itself."

"But why? You are skeptical, but there are odors that catch me, lift me out of myself, out of the world, and bring to me lucid, magical moments. And in such moments I feel the vivid conviction of a freedom from the grossness of material life."

"Ah, then you too feel an intuition, and feel the presence of the soul."

"I wonder. And there are sounds in nature and in music, and sights in life and in art, that carry the same conviction."

"Then why not soul?"

"My difficulty is still that all this seems to me merely a way of speaking of the senses and our reactions to them. But sense and soul, even in the vernacular, stand in opposition.

"I see what you mean," said the poet. "Not that soul may not be grasped intuitively, but that if it is anything to speak of, if it has anything to it but a ravishing vacuum, it must have something to say for itself by which it can be distinguished from the primary intuitions of sense. And it must prove its distinctive worth. That is a fair enough demand."

"Can it be met?"

They sat before the window for some minutes before the poet resumed.

"If I am to imagine a world without beauty," he began slowly at last, "to imagine myself with all my moments conscious only of gutters, and slums, and Calvinism, steel bridges, trousers, pot houses, coal mines, anthropology, legislatures, divorce courts, fashion, slang — it would be to imagine myself without the subtle sense within me that I am worth more than the dust. But I have had other moments. I have seen the sunrise. Once I saw an English lark in the sky. I have seen fair faces, quiet manners, silks clinging to graceful forms, crocuses in March snows, the quad of Oriel, the Venus de Milo. I've listened to Bizet and Schubert,

heard the wind in the pines on the edge of Pacific slopes. I have read Keats and Euripides. And it is in such moments that I know that these and not those are the things to strive for. I know what direction in these matters life should take. I know which soars toward heaven and which sinks to hell. I don't know why I know it, but that I do know it, that it gives an impulse that lifts the whole of life into a thing above the scum, and that it vitalizes and enhalos certain aims — of this I am certain. And so I say soul."

They sat another few moments in silence.

"I am disarmed," said his host, picking up the discourse. "I confess that when you began a little while ago to use the word I imagined dire things of you. I supposed that you had in mind something that you couldn't describe. I know that life has its underlying mysteries — that the simplest thing — the smell of the sod that comes into the window here and makes us both thrill with the sense of spring — can only be accepted and not explained. Why I like it I don't know. It is one of the primary mysteries.

"What I was arming myself against was a new and gratuitous set of mysteries. Your friends of the artistic shop go beyond the pale, and when they say soul, many of them, they seem to intend something merely mysterious. It is often open to doubt whether they themselves know what they mean. But here at last you have used the term intelligently enough. You have averred that beauty is a faculty of the soul and that the soul is the seat of those spontaneous preferences by which we dis-

tinguish higher and lower, better and worse. You have put meaning into the terms. We are on solid ground. We know definitely where we are."

"Definitely?" The poet had a touch of mockery in his smile.

"Ah, you grow literal. No, not definitely, but sufficiently for the purpose."

They looked at the last orange band of day in the west. A white star was set in the green iris above it, and the first quarter of the moon hung overhead.

"I've been wondering what the purpose was," the poet said at last. "Sometimes I've been unkind enough to think that what you have wanted is to bring beauty—" he waved a hand toward the sky—"down to the narrow confines and dull terms of earth."

"I have. I have."

"Heaven help you!"

"For I would make life beautiful."

"By cribbing and confining it to paltry terms of reason?"

"To terms that make it significant. For don't you see, say what we will, we can never alter the eternal fact of beauty. The intuition of it stays the same whatever the phrases we use. But the *discussion* of it belongs to the workaday world. And so it is important, when we do discuss it, and not simply experience it, to use terms that make it commensurate with the world we are discussing it in. Why, else, discuss it? And after all we are concerned with art. If we talked of beauty it was only incidentally. Beauty exists. But art is a

practice, and belongs to the part of living that we control. We have it or not, or in such and such a proportion, as we will. And it is to that end that it is worth stopping for a moment in the contemplation or creation of beauty to discuss it — to find its nice place and proportion in the workaday process of living."

"And yet," said the poet, "I don't like your dulling intrusion of the reason."

The last light of the sun was gone, and the quad below was frosted with the moon.

"It was you who clarified the point," his host smiled.

"Ah, evil communications — "

III**ART AND THE REASONERS**

It was not until a day late in the spring that they caught up again the thread of the arts. The evening before, wild with a boisterous north wind and a purple drift of clouds, had promised a fine morrow. The poet had proposed an early start and a visit to the dunes by the lake, to put the season's best day to a good use. His friend had demurred for a moment. He had not hunted out Nature for many years, and he misdoubted the welcome she would extend to him. He had consented at last, however, and next morning the two men made the journey.

If they talked on the way, youthfully, forgetful of the years, as men will at the first setting out on a day's jaunt, they had little enough to say from the moment they touched the loose sands, at first from the soft footing that used their breath, and afterwards, when they had made the swale between two hummocks that had hid the lake, from the presence of what they had come for. For they were young enough still to feel for a time the spell of the place — the tumult of the lake, the endless stretch of flat beach, the dunes, piled and scooped and hollowed — a world of blue and white, and of yellow sands, with here and there the green of streaming grasses, dwarfed oaks straining landward, and vivid lupin with its blue flower reflecting the sky. They were taken possession of by the roaring waters and the battering wind, and by the sting of sand, and the glinting sunlight.

They wandered about among the fantastic architecture of the dunes, or sat in sheltered hollows where the sand sifted down on them and filled the wrinkles of their clothes. They were silent, a lift of the hand saying all there was to say. The poet, however, after the first half hour, was restless; something, the wind, the roar of the waves, some inner wish unsatisfied, kept him ill at ease. Once he started up with a growl, when a trim-bearded man with a tin canister slung from his shoulder came into their vista. The invader was walking slowly, with eyes riveted to the sand at his feet, and apparently lecturing to two boys, who followed listening, their own eyes on the sand.

To our friend there was something pleasant in the sight of these three naturalists, so blind to the large impression of the scene, so ardent in their attention to particular details. With his love for the spectacle of life, and the sense of its mingling of many interests and many activities, there had come now and again in the course of the morning a whisper of emptiness in their own attempt to escape from it. He responded sensitively, indeed, to the thrill of sight and sound, and for moments together he could forget that life held anything beyond, or need hold anything beyond. But a vague discomfort, something more than the sadness of beauty, hung like a haze in the atmosphere of his mind. And now it became dimly articulate. He pictured the three naturalists home again, tired, with faces burning, garrulous about the day's finds and silent about its beauties; but with the consciousness of that background of boisterous air and vivid color and sweep-

ing lines forever endearing the memory of their pre-occupation. By contrast their own search for the pure thrill, detached from a justifying substance, seemed weak and futile.

By a tacit consent, while the afternoon was still young, they turned back to the city. Once or twice on the journey the poet roused himself as though to speak, and then sank back in silence. When they alighted he insisted on taking the other home. He was eager; he had unfinished things to say.

His friend was interested, amused. The poet too, then, had found the thrill insufficient. A little sadly he recognized that their time of pure illusion had passed. Nature had lost its personal immediacy; its sympathy was gone, and the communion that was once the solace of such wanderings no longer held its old rapport. They were humanized. The significance of their day in the open, if it was to have a significance, had now to come from themselves, to be wrought out, to be rationalized.

When they had settled themselves in the poet's snug study, and had broached a bottle of the Madeira for which among his friends he was as renowned as for his verse, the restlessness of the day found its relaxation. It took form, on the part of the poet, in a hearty objurgation of the trio of naturalists. Our friend was amused and silent, seeing in this outburst the poet's rebellion against the manifestations he had felt in himself.

"I am weary of the reason," he said, "and the life of reason. Look at it around us here. Everything is a matter of calculation. Sometimes I would have the old life of duels and drink, roistering and prison

for debt again. It was human at least. *Things* are in the saddle. And about *things* there's nothing but calculation. There used to be young men mooning about with sonnets in their brains. Well, they were better than young men keen about the stock market. Freedom and justice used to make young orators glow; and now it's all statistics and economics. There used to be fierce partisans of Achilles, and Hector, Ulysses, Themistocles, Coeur de Leon, Cromwell, and now there is nothing but a set of clerks grovelling among dusty documents. And where of old we used to have young men who would weep over the Apology, now we have these striplings following that parched worm-monger, brainbound, grubbing there in the midst of beauty, as insensible to it as the snails that the sandpipers turn and wheel and turn again to find at the ebb of the waves. I want to see the old generous days again when life was human!"

Our friend was moved. He too, in his own way, had mourned the mechanical cast that economics, efficiency, and the scientific method were giving to those aspects of the intellectual life that could flower best untouched by that baleful trio. But he knew that the poet, from his own point of view, like the Bergsonian who years ago had warned him against the reason, was not free himself from the need to reason and seem reasonable. He detected an interesting distinction that might be worth pursuit. The poet's note of rebellion was commonplace among the romantic and artistic sects. It had occurred to him not infrequently that their aversion to the reason was often evident, not only in their

words, but also in the quality of their ideas, and that art itself was suffering grievously from their malady.

"Once upon a time," he said, "you will remember, we talked about beauty and the soul. I sha'n't soon forget it; you did something that is hard to forgive — you convinced me against my will. I dare say that it wasn't altogether wasted for you, for you gave us both a clearer sense of a very delicate point. Well, that was what I should call reasoning. You will remember that your conclusion was that the *soul* was the center of our intuitive aspirations."

"Spontaneous ones, not reasoned."

"Yes, spontaneous. But there lies the point. You were not satisfied to have your intuitions. You wanted me to understand and agree with you — take the same attitude to beauty that you took. And there you were. You reasoned. There was nothing else for it. You are sociable; you like your friends, and want to share your sense of the world with them. That is one use of the reason, and I imagine that you for one would never be willing to give it up. You are even a poet. But there's another use. The *soul*, you say, is the center of spontaneous, intuitive preferences — beauty, courage, wisdom, honor, justice, religion, and all the other high aspirations that make us head in one direction and not in another. And living is an affair calculated at its best to carry out these aspirations."

"Yes."

"And these aspirations are spontaneous, not reasoned."

"Yes."

"Then there lies the second use. Which aspirations shall we follow, and in what proportions? For they spring up of themselves, and sometimes at inopportune moments; and often they conflict. Shall I buy a certain Tudor sideboard that I long for with my love of beauty, or the Plutarch that I long for with my love of wisdom, or pay off the family debt, that I groan under with my sense of duty, or help poor Oakly the bankrupt, in the next street, that I feel sorry for with my sympathy? The color of life, personal and social, depends, doesn't it, upon such judgments, and upon the proportions that our responses take in following them?"

"Perhaps. Go on."

"You don't love the spectacle of monasticism, all religion and little beauty, with its evasion of the full moral struggle of social life. But that monasticism represents one set of proportions, and is dictated by an intuition that has high claims upon the soul. I mean religion. And you don't care for the spectacle of Calvinism, all morals and religion but no beauty. But there's another set of proportions. Benvenuto Cellini is a more pleasing spectacle perhaps, but I doubt whether you would care for a life built on his proportions. Even he had his religion and his fine courage, as well as his sense of beauty. Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, George Moore nauseate you; you don't care for their proportions."

"And you — you would throw us to the mercy of the three grub-hunters who passed us to-day, crawling through paradise with their noses in the sand?"

"Hardly. And yet they stand for something. They have a sense of reason, and if they would only

stick to science, as they so roiled you by doing to-day, I should have no objection to them."

"You do chafe at them, then?"

"And respect them too. For I can't help seeing that the reason is the authority for us all."

"Again!"

"With a distinction. It's just the distinction that you seem not to make — between the scientific reason and the moral reason. We've allowed the scientists to get us all adrift in the matter. They haven't made the distinction either. But their reason is not my reason nor yours. We are concerned with the moral reason. It's the moral reason that is the final authority. Is that a bold statement? I dare say that some day they will come to acknowledge its truth."

"I don't know just where you are taking me," the poet smiled, "but you've turned down a pleasant lane, and I'll go with you for a way. It's not much worn, this lane."

"I know. The whole current of traffic just now is over the scientific road. The opinion that is going about is that science is the final authority in all things. Well, it isn't."

His host sat up with reviving interest.

"I'm inclined to agree with you," he returned. "Still let me take up the cudgels. I can remember the thrill of the moment when the scientific vision came on me first — of hierarchies of laws governing the greatest motions and the subtlest reactions of the outstretching universe, from the stars down to the least quiver of conscious emotion. The conception is thrilling. I've rebelled and hid away the thought

in the dark cellars of my mind. But I can't forget it."

"But that is not science."

"How do you mean — not science?"

"It's a vision; it's poetry."

"But science?"

"Something humbler, I should say — a body of human knowledge. After all, what more is it? They used to smile with scorn, half a century ago, at our naïve old anthropocentric notions of life, and praise science for releasing us from such egotistic fancies. They strutted and swelled about a good deal, those old scientists, in their humility. They were proud of their discovery that humanity was only a cousin to the brutes, an accident of the great process, a mere worm. Well, they never got away, of course, from the anthropocentric attitude. Their pride was in their own very human accomplishment. I'm not at all sure but that they were more anthropocentric than the old theologues; the latter at least conceived a God outside themselves.

"The point is, isn't it, that to be sure we may be mere worms under the feet of universal law, and everything from the motions of the stars to the subtlest quiver of emotion may be determined by an inevitable mechanical necessity, but that science *isn't* universal law; it is only human knowledge, and can never be anything more than human knowledge.

"The old scientists — what a race they were! — egotists of the sublimest kind! I can't help, myself, admiring their colossal pride. It's the stuff of all great and spectacular heroism. What they tried to do — really thought they were doing — was to look

down on poor humanity from the point of view of the gods. Only, of course, like all other mortals, they couldn't. They had no more knowledge than human knowledge. How could they? And their pride was a very human pride in their human knowledge."

"I see your point," the poet mused — "that being human we can't get above our own point of view. If we could, still it would be our own point of view, *ad infinitum*. The world is important for us because we're here, and its values for us are inevitably its human values. But still if the scientists — I'm drawing from that vision that I hate — are, in their human way, attaining a knowledge of those universal laws, why aren't they the final authorities in human affairs?"

"You come to the subtle point," his friend returned. "I don't know that I have the skill to put it, but I should say something like this. All these things that we exercise moral judgment in — things that are involved in this matter of authority as we have used the word — all these things are outside the specific range of science. If there is something resembling universal law, then that law will go on operating no matter what we do. Disease is as much an expression of it as health, misery as much as happiness, anarchy as much as order. What does universal law care? If science were all in all we might let things drift. It would be as much pleased with blight as with blooming orchards. But don't you see, humanly we desire some operations of that law more than others — health instead of sickness, justice instead of injustice, comfort instead of discomfort.

"Being human we inject certain preferences into the pot. And I suspect that at bottom we value this body of human knowledge called science, and cultivate it so sedulously, because we believe that it can serve us in attaining these preferences. We set up, don't we, an idea of human character and an idea of social relations that we think admirable. And on the basis of those ideas we go in for science, or don't go in for it, or go in for it in a certain degree. What else is there, ultimately, to prompt us in the matter? Certainly not universal law. It goes on with or without our approval indifferently — as much pleased when a man dies of consumption as when he dies of old age.

"Universal law goes on whether scientists are there to search into its secrets or not. But whether there shall be any science is a matter of moral judgment. Shall a man be a barber, or a lawyer or a scientist? Not science but moral judgment determines. Shall an institution cultivate science; shall a community have such a thing; shall there be such a thing; what direction shall it take; what use shall it be put to, or not be put to? All of these things are matters of moral judgment."

"Yet science gives you authentic guidance."

"Information rather, isn't it? Just as the plumber gives you information about pipes but doesn't help you as to whether to tap the mains surreptitiously."

"There is a distinction."

"And so I say that in the large it is the moral and not the scientific authority that is final."

"And the point of all this?"

"Ah, was there a point?"

"I'm sure there was."

"I remember. When you think of the reason and rebel against its hardness and coldness, and its mechanical obtuseness to the humaner things that you care so much for, isn't it the scientific reason that you have in mind?"

"I dare say. But what has this to do with beauty? There it is — a thing in itself. Little it recks for you and your moral reason."

"Exactly. And little the universal laws care for us and our moral reason. But here we are. Life is a matter of living in the midst of all the things that are given — the *donnés* of existence — beauty among the rest. And there we are. The question is how to make out the kind of life we aspire to among all the conditions and pressures and demands that we find ourselves among willy nilly. If beauty were the only claimant the case would be simple, but it isn't, and for very few is it even the chief. Hence the question of proportion; and hence the need of reason."

"That is all very reasonable," said the poet with a resigned smile, "and very dull. But contrast this morning with this last hour; which shall we both remember the longer, and with more pleasure?"

"Contrast prose and verse, wages and wine," smiled his guest. "I grant the dullness, but it is you romanticists who have made it necessary to go back over the old ground. It was conquered ground once."

"What will you make of it once you have retaken it?"

"Another long story, and equally dull. Besides there is a tawny sunset to light us to dinner. Come."

"I dare say you care no more for the reason than I do," said the poet, reaching for his hat.

IV**MADAME'S TASTE**

THEY set out one afternoon afoot, with no other intention than to end up before a good dinner and bring to it a worthy appetite. They decided promptly upon an obscure little restaurant some half dozen miles away, of which they had been told, and where certain things were to be had. The way thither was by one of those long streets of our American cities that can acquire no atmosphere about their names because they cut mechanically through a score of atmospheres — streets which plunge ahead, looking neither to right nor to left, and pass from opulence to poverty without a pause, without a bow, and reveal but the more cruelly the ancient stratification that democracy has had no power to fuse.

As they went they talked of other wanderings in other cities, and inevitably of London, where perhaps more than anywhere else the lover of streets may find the things he loves — the irregularity that gives to each stretch its own character, the jogs and turns, the alleys, the passages, the buildings infinite in their dingy ugliness but with the charm of something human in their huddled adaptation to the ancient stresses of the maze; the surprise of unexpected gardens, of quiet churchyards, of market squares; the humanity that seems to have sprung from the stones, so adapted are the types; above all the names that bring to the bare present the enriching association of past times, household words of

the mind to which life is endeared by the sense of the long human struggle.

By contrast the way they were going seemed bare and mechanic. They knew, indeed, that part of their loss, part of what they missed, was due to their indigenous eyes, that custom had robbed them of the surprise that a traveler from other parts would have enriched the spectacle with, that what they saw revealed itself to them too plainly and left no room for surmise. But they knew too that something was missing there — that in the bare economic struggle which alone seemed to express itself in the variation from block to block as they tramped on was not the stuff to accumulate, even in the passage of time, the particular things that had endeared the greater ugliness of the older Babylon.

For a moment they questioned the justice of this accusation, it was so tainted with the dear platitudes with which a business community refreshes itself in its pauses for breath. How they hated those voices that were so little different, explicitly, from their own! And they recalled with sad merriment that interjection of Thackeray's — that "*other* quacks, plague take them" with which he put the ineffable last touch upon himself and upon the world of Vanity Fair. But they knew they were right. The getting of a living was important, as were other contributions levied by nature, but it was not the thing that stirred the loyalty that — each in his own way — they had for what was human. And as they passed along the endless succession of house-fronts suggestive of so little but that eternal office of nature, more and more dingy as

they went on but without variation in kind, they drew their conclusions in silence.

From the region of fenced gardens they had come into the region of unfenced gardens, then into the region of narrow houses wall to wall, then into a shabby region where boarding houses and modistes, and bakeshops and midwives held forth on placards or brass plates, then on to miles of tenements with here and there weedy lots between that held flaunting billboards begging the public to change its tradesmen; and at last were come to a region so ugly with bleary-paned shops, and dingy beer saloons, and dark dens of poverty up the narrow stairs between, that the poet groaned aloud.

It was on the farther edge of this region that they were to find the little restaurant where certain things were to be had. The poet had had explicit directions from someone who had been there, but his memory, though vivid, was at fault. Knowing, however that they were in the neighborhood of it they began inquiring. No one seemed able to tell them where it was. It was getting on to dusk, a time when most prospects succumb to the charm of deepening colors and softening shadows, but to the ugliness around them it added only the horror of increasing gloom. Screaming children, drunken men, rowdy groups of loafers, shabby beshawled women swarmed the littered walks and gutters. The roar of the street cars and traffic mingled with the roar that came out of the open doors of the saloons in a ceaseless din.

They put their heads into the front doors of steamy eating houses, their noses attacked by the

thousand smells of rank food and rank humanity, and their ears by the crash of dishes and the roar of voices. They retreated to the street to be jostled, to be ignored, to be brazenly solicited. Once they penetrated to the interior of a garish palace, red and gold, with colossal nudes looking down on the flashy sordidness of the gayety at the tables below them. Again they backed into the street.

"Let us get away from here," the poet groaned again.

"*Nil humanum* —" his friend smiled sadly.

"You are right. Let us go on looking."

They ranged along the squalid house-fronts weary and ashamed. At last with the aid of a child, whose hard face stared at them from under a ragged shawl, they were taken, with misgivings, into a gloomy basement under high street steps. It was a sinister, lowering spot. Their guide left them with a shriek, at the wealth in her hand or at the ruse she had played them, they could not tell.

They were in a little hall, grim, bare, lighted by a single gas burner. A door opened half way down. An ancient waiter with black, short jacket and white apron stood bowing in the doorway, his black sleek hair shining under the gas flare. Reassured they went in to the inner room.

They knew at once that they had arrived. Their first impression was of silence, and then of something more penetrating and more restful — a hard and clean simplicity. It was a low basement room set out with a dozen black tables and black kitchen chairs with flat backs and narrow waists. The walls were white. At the front was a high white-

curtained window. A red rose on the sill and a red rose on each table were the only touches of color.

At the back of the room, on a little platform behind a comptoire sat Madame, large, shapeless, stolid, with a peasant's face, her black hair flat on her small head. Our friends took places not far from this throne, followed by the waiter with card and menu. He hung above them patiently, bent at the hips, in the half humble, half fatherly way of old French waiters who have attained wisdom from their vantage ground. He beamed when the poet spoke in his own tongue.

When he was gone the two men sat in silence. They were the only guests as yet, and the place had uninterrupted leisure to sink into their consciousness. Its quiet, its unadornment, its bare honesty, had much to say to them that they could not retell at once. They felt together its rebuke. It was not pretty; it was not cunningly contrived. It was the expression of something simple and austere. They agreed that it was beautiful, and that Madame, with her impassive face that Millet might have painted, humanized it.

No doubt, as they knew, it was partly the memories of old inns in Normandy that charmed them, and partly too the refuge it had been to them, the sudden contrast, the unspeakable ugliness it had been an escape from. All that, however, had its point; the place had for their grateful sense but the more bravely maintained its ancient virtues amidst the squalor and sordidness of the neighborhood. And if now it had come to be known to a few, like themselves, from so different a world, it must have

had its years of sordid local struggle before such knowledge could get abroad.

"You have been here long, madame?" the poet asked.

"It has been many years, monsieur," she answered, impassively.

They would have liked to talk to her, to ask questions, to gain the tale of her childhood, of her migration, of her experience during those many years, but something that they both felt, the rebuke of their idle curiosity, held them back. Before their dinner arrived the tables had begun to fill up, and their chance was gone.

Only twice did the stolidity of Madame's face and attitude relax. Once the door by her side swung open and a nurse, herself scarcely more than a child, entered carrying a black-haired baby and set it upon the comptoire before her. The nurse withdrew without a word and left the two together. It was like a ceremony. In a little while a young woman, slender, and with a face solemnly happy, came in and took the baby away. Scarce a word passed between them.

"They were born here, lived here, daughter and grandchild?" the poet asked of the waiter who stood beaming on the tableau.

"Yes, monsieur," the waiter replied.

"You are thriving now?"

"Yes, monsieur, now."

"There was a time, then — "

The old waiter glanced down the room, and then turned again to the two guests at the table by the rail.

"I speak of what I have seen, messieurs," he began. "What I speak of is past and gone, and we are as you see us. But there was a time —"

He was called. Twice again he drew near to their table but both times he was drawn away before he could go on.

"It is as well," said the poet. "One can piece out the tale."

"Still, I should like the particulars," his friend demurred.

But the chance was gone. Reluctantly they left when the dinner was done.

"Les messieurs have been well served?" Madame asked as they bowed good-night to her.

The poet answered from his heart, and for a moment her face again softened.

Our friends passed out of the dingy hall into the dingier street, where the night life had already begun — the shouting, the strains of music from the lighted saloons, the shrieks of children gathered about the doors, the shawled women gossiping in shrill groups, loafers leaning against dark walls, reeling figures mumbling to themselves, dirt, and decay, and darkness.

It was the afternoon of the next day that they had it out, as our friend irreverently put it, about this experience, and incidentally about another problem that still hung over their minds. They had come home from their dinner wearied by their walk on the hard pavements, and even more by the monotony and sordidness of much of their impressions — despite Madame's — but with the sense that

they had not got at the thing that to them was the thing of importance. They had not got at its significance.

The poet was the first to break out once they were together again. He launched into invectives against what he called our modern division of happiness. It was apparently new to him. How he had lived his forty years and been oblivious to so much that lay just beyond his elbow he could not have said. The truth was he had seen it with his eyes, had read of it in the daily and monthly prints, but never before had had it brought home to him with the full force of its yesterday's attack upon his sensibilities. And he was still bewildered about it.

"Poverty," he mused. "I was born in a poor family, but it was a dry poverty — scant meals, scant clothes, and a fierce pride. It was not like this — loose, relaxed, rotting. This is horrible."

"What can we do?" our friend asked, sadly enough. It was his old problem; he had never found the idea that should thrust it aside.

They sat in silence for a while.

"If I were one of those we rubbed elbows with on the street last night," the poet broke out at last, "I should have my fling at the fine delicate structure I was groaning at the base of. I should have nothing to lose, and to-day I can't quite justify myself for playing safe where I am. It's as though I were sitting tight just because I do have something to lose."

Our friend smiled, without amusement. He caught, in the crude terms of this outburst, the force

of its first attack before the sad complexity of the problem had come home. It was the point at which the new school of generous young radicals impotently stopped.

"You've never felt so before?" he asked.

"Not just in this way. And I can't believe that you are going to say that I'll grow hardened and sink back."

"I dare say that you will. But that isn't just what I was going to say. I was going to wonder how you have escaped so long. For now, clearly, alas, you too have been caught."

"I don't understand you," the poet puzzled. "It's as though you had suddenly turned up hard. I don't want you soft, you understand, but I don't want to quit until I see that you aren't quite cruel."

"Ah, we shan't quit. It's just that that's impossible. The thing is how you have kept from beginning until now."

"I've been, I suppose, in an ivory tower."

"I dare say, for the shock you've just had is the thing that's been shaking us for a score of years. I don't quite know how to put it. It has a thousand aspects. The one that strikes me now is this. Every age has its own way of feeling the raw edge of life, and this is our way. It's a matter of reactions. When tyranny's the thing the poets climb down and are shocked and join the revolution. There's the Eighteenth Century in France. When it's hardened tradition and sophistication, when convention, title, and rank are in the saddle, it's neglected individuality and merit that cry out. There's the Eighteenth Century in England. And

now wealth's the thing, and poverty fills us with horror."

"And you, because you can sit aloof and see it as one of an eternal series of revolts against evil, is it to seem to you, therefore, the less important? Is it the point of learning that it takes away faith and hope?"

"I know that it must seem so — not to you; you are merely putting the case — but to those others who are so kindly eager to set it right sweepingly, in the large. In a sense they are right. It does make one a little harder hearted — not about the particular case, but about the general case."

The poet knew, through many bitter complaints, that his friend was liberal in his charities both with time and money. The complaints came from characteristic sources, and were to the effect that he demoralized, in his own degree, the current efforts to deal from above with the problem of poverty, preferring to gratify a kindly conscience rather than to be a good citizen.

"Is it a case for hard-heartedness at all?" the poet asked, hypothetically; for knowing his friend, the question, as he saw, was personally absurd.

"For cool-headedness," the other returned abruptly, "which goes for the same thing with many of those we are talking about. The thing isn't so simple as they, in their immediate sympathies, are in the way of feeling. They go at poverty itself — as though that in itself were the evil! It is evil enough, heaven knows, but it's not *the* evil."

"So I should have said, till we had our sight of it yesterday. Since then I haven't been so certain. It was horrible."

"Not that it wasn't horrible, but that poverty wasn't the cause," his friend added.

"Why not? It breeds there, and the brood grows. What but poverty keeps them there?"

They sat for a moment looking out of the window.

"There was Madame," our friend put at last.

"Ah!" The poet's eyes swept round with a new and sudden light in them.

The point was prolific between them in the silence that followed. It came to them without stint that there *was* Madame.

"Nothing by way of relief of poverty could have done it," our friend considered.

The fact was before them. It sent itself crashing through a good deal of the flimsy structure of current humanitarianism around them. And after they had looked among the wreckage with compunction for the spiritual life the structure was thought to have housed, they turned away. They had sympathy for the ardor they saw housed there; they acknowledged that often there was generosity in it to the degree of nobility. But what, for the two of them as they looked into the ruins, had been revealed, was that the worship going on there was, simply, not spiritual.

"You count sympathy as nothing, then, and service?" the poet asked, the halo of the current terms still lingering in his vision. "I should have called them spiritual."

The other looked at him with the amused smile that won him the repute of hardness.

"Until you had begun to think," he returned. "The trouble with the humanitarian shop is that

there is so little thinking in it. When you had begun to think you would have seen at once that sympathy was a good only when it was for a good thing, and service was a good only when it was for a good thing. But whether they minister to the life of the spirit or minister to chaos — that is the question. And the humanitarians have, by and large, simply stopped short of thinking out that question. They have stopped short of first thinking out the life of the spirit — the real thing — the thing itself."

"Of which sympathy and service may be a part, though."

"Ah, a tremendous part. Because there at last they are in their own natural homes. They sweeten life there, and give it warmth and kindness, socialize it, make it spread outward. They humanize it. Do I talk sentimentally?"

"But as to Madame?"

"What the humanitarians so egregiously don't rise to," commented our friend, "is just that the thing that carried Madame through *was* spiritual."

"We've got to face the fact," amended the poet, "that she also had her exquisite cooking."

"Which left her still on the spot — that spot."

They hung upon that for a moment.

"What isn't so easy to see," resumed the poet at last, "is how, if you were put to it, you could get those others there to take up with the qualities that have redeemed Madame — the spiritual ones."

"Clearly not by putting at the bottom of our creed and theirs that the great difficulty was the lack of funds. There were many times Madame's funds in the horrible place next door."

"But not the cooking."

"You come back to that. Well, the cooking was spiritual."

After they had had their smile our friend took up the point from where he had put it.

"I mean spiritual," he continued. "There was an idea in it, a conception of the thing that was good, a persistence in it because it was the thing that was good. It was a job well done — kept up, mother to daughter, for a score of years, and against what discouragements! There was the dining room, unspeakably bare and poor, and beautiful. They stuck to a virtue that was in them."

"But they had the virtue. How about those others? What virtue had they?"

"Ah, there we are," said our friend, with the glow of finality.

The younger man, still fresh from his new emotions, looked up puzzled.

"And yet I don't see just where."

"Somewhere near the center. I mean that there's the great task — what's waiting to be created — the ideas — the current sense of the thing that's above all worth doing — the thing Madame had in her, and the things that that can stand as a type of. You see what I mean. Humanitarianism misses her; it is so hopelessly economic. The present sense of things misses her; *it* is so hopelessly economic."

He paused a moment, and his eye lit up with raillery at the vein he must seem to have fallen into.

"I see that I'm on the verge of cant," he laughed, "railling at economics because it is materialistic. Economics isn't deplorable because it's materialistic."

We're all of us, God help us, materialistic. It's deplorable because it doesn't attack the problem. If we get out of the muddle we're in, it will be because we have found the solution elsewhere. And that is why Madame's seems to me so significant. For Madame's there in the midst of that sick spot *has solved the problem*. And the Palace hasn't; it has helped to create it, for all its funds. Madame had — how shall I say it? — an idea, a conception, taste, and something that made her cling to it — even there."

They pondered the point for a moment.

"I see," the poet said at last. "And yet —"

"And yet," the other repeated with old-time fire, for he had given a dying cadence to his last words.

"And yet," the poet persisted, "the task you point out, the spread of right conceptions, ideas, tastes, is slow. Meantime —"

"Ah, meantime," he began, and then with a return upon himself, and the old irony that had made him so many enemies among those who could not understand him, "meantime let us sit aloof and rail at the age. And when we have done with railing, and have looked out with purged eyes on the world, I dare say we shall realize that the struggle is eternal and the problem never to be solved. Perhaps that is a happy thing. Utopia would be an intolerable place. But here taste, and intelligence, and character have a chance to keep fit in the struggle. For the struggle is the thing."

They were not quite done with Madame's.

Summer had given way to fall when one afternoon

they resumed their dropped thread, as though, symbolically, as the poet would once have said, their intellects were reviving with the dying of nature. Their depression at the contact of poverty was long past, and other interests that for a time had hung in abeyance had come forward again, and had claimed and been given an open welcome. The return was naïve and unconscious on the part of the poet, but the older man recognized it as that process of hardening that he had predicted, and that had seemed at the time a suggestion of his aloof cynicism. He could understand how to some it might seem so, but with his friend he would not have had it other than it was. It was a recovery of perspective. And he preferred a poet with a perspective to one addition among the humanitarians.

How far the poet had reverted, indeed, was shown in the fact that he returned to Madame, but took her up, not on the side of her relation to poverty, but — by what at first seemed an invisible thread — on the side of her relation to the arts.

"With your scorn of the arts," he said, leaping to the subject from two or three removes, "you one day used a phrase that struck me — amazed me."

The other looked his inquiry.

"You spoke of Madame's taste."

"Ah, she had taste."

"You put it first — at the bottom."

"Well?"

"Haven't you rather surrendered?"

The other looked up with the kindling eye of his awakened interest.

"At discretion," he smiled. "I fancy we have come to an understanding."

"On the contrary," the poet protested, "what so clearly stands out to me is just that I at least haven't. As for you, you never doubt. But I — your sudden words about Madame's taste swept me back to my own position when I thought I had given it up. And there I am now."

His friend smiled. That he never doubted was a note that had come to him before, and it disturbed and amused him. He had doubted almost everything, and perhaps most of all himself. But he took his ideas hard, perhaps because he had come to none of them without winning to them through a sea of doubts.

Friends of his spoke of his course as paralleling the miser's. But he pointed out the liberality with which he showered his opinions upon them, and they joined his laugh and withdrew their point. They had the amused recollection of long winter afternoons and longer nights spent with him by his fireside, where nothing had drawn them but that liberality. They had disagreed with him freely, and sometimes been angered, or even wearied, but they had always come back. He had created a place among them, and they resorted to him, finding there something that they could find nowhere else. Once over his hospitable threshold they came into an atmosphere that serenified even their most stormy clashes. When they crossed it they left behind them a good deal of the world, for all the vestiges of Havana and Xeres that greeted them there, and stepped into the presence of many things that were large, and calm, and permanent.

In another sense, however, the parallel of the

miser was happier. For as he grew older he grew more and more centered in his one pursuit, and though he went about more, and consorted more with his friends, he let the militant causes of the moment more and more alone. He liked ideas for their own sakes; and if he never lost his sense that life was a matter of living, and that ideas got their quick vitality and their human importance from their contact with reality, still they grew for him increasingly real in and for themselves. They were his real estate, he used to pun. And when he looked about him at the things that most other men struggled for, and got praise from the arbiters of the age for struggling for, they seemed as tolerable prey as any. To him, naturally, they seemed incomparably the best.

More than one of his critics — for he had by now a book or two to his credit — to his debit, alas, he admitted — had smiled at this passion of his, perceiving that for all his devotion he had somehow missed the note of originality. They were right, but they missed the point. For what he was after, as he himself knew when he looked back on his own long quest, was not the invention of new ideas. He had indeed the humor to doubt his prowess in that matter, and to blush inwardly at the supposition that he had been all along the champion of his own genius. What he was after was not novelty, but truth.

There was something about that very attitude, it was true, that in a forgetful age might of itself pass for originality. It was rare enough. But his own value for it, characteristically, was just that it

was not new — it had been the attitude of the men he liked best on the shelves around him. And if almost all of them *were* on the shelf, and almost none of them among the lively intellects of his time, still there he was with his passion for ideas of that kind. It was his own passion.

It was for that reason, no doubt, that other men of ideas more original than his should find something restful in his company, and in the equilibrium that even their disagreements by his fireside tended to make for. They came away sometimes discontent in the suspicion that their own originality was often a hole and corner affair, and they liked him for the moment none the better for that. But in time the suspicion that their science, or their aesthetics, or their humanitarianism, or their scholarship was not, after all, all that there was to be said about life, sent them back again reluctantly. They hated robustly to give up the importance of hole and corner, but they were, first of all, intelligent, and they did come back.

None of them, perhaps, so often as the poet. He had a freer play of mind, and a more susceptible spirit, and he valued more than most of them the peculiar thing that he got from that contact. When now he put his question about Madame's taste he was not only genuinely touched by the problem, but he had a lurking, affectionate malice, and he liked to watch the whole apparatus of his friend's mind in motion to dispose of an atom.

The disconcerting charm of that mind, however, was its consciousness of its own humors. Its owner now looked at the younger man thoughtfully, settled

himself into his great chair, and then, catching the gleam at the back of the poet's eye, narrowed his own into a smile.

"Have you hardened — you?" he asked.

The other sobered. He caught the echo of his own old phrase.

"I've been thinking —" he began, and then stopped at the amusement in the glance that confronted him. He caught in it suddenly a point that put them a long way forward in their journey.

"Ah, you are generous," he said. "You catch me home. But if I do acknowledge that there is where reason comes in, still —"

It came over him in higher and higher waves, under the other's gaze, that there was where the reason did come in. He waited for a moment struggling to emerge and get his normal breath.

"There *is* where the reason comes in!" he exclaimed again. Then catching the malice in the other's smile he hurried on. "Say that I *have* saved myself from going over body and soul to the humanitarians by thinking it out, by what you call the reason — I see the point; I come to it. But it was agreed between us, wasn't it, that at the bottom, giving the first bent to our sense of what was good, was a set of primal tendencies, preferences — love of justice, love of beauty, religious aspiration and many others — and that reason came in afterward and judged, adjusted, umpired, proportioned between them — did something of that nature — but that the first direction was given by the other thing, the primal aspiration. And here you have granted just that arrangement by putting Madame's taste at

the bottom of her virtue. She wanted her kind of thing and not the Palace kind of thing, and she stuck to her kind of thing against all the odds, and solved the problem in the end."

"Your sketch is fair."

"And I am thrown back upon my old position."

"That salvation is an æsthetic matter?"

"Just so, and in practice is to come through the arts."

The older man sat for a time in thought. His friend studied the thoughtful face before him. What welled up in it before long was a kindling look of amused intention.

"Will you go on a quest?" he asked.

The poet nodded. He knew those reflective urban adventures of his host. For the most part they were undertaken alone, but he had sometimes been admitted to a share in them, as but now at Madame's. Or was it that when his friend went with him his pleasures became reflective adventures? At all events he knew how the ordinary set pleasures of the city looked pale and tasted flat after them, not from any austere disapproval arising from the stern spectacle that often they had to contemplate, but rather from the richer pleasure of the adventures themselves. Their comedy was real; it was organic; it enriched the very life they were leading. An hour's browsing in some second-hand book shop, half reading, half catching beyond the edge of the book the dusty life of the place, and its dusty owner, and its dusty frequenters, left him deeper memories than most pleasures could leave. Once they had sat out a gloomy afternoon in the

workshop of a solitary bookbinder, and listened, while the deft fingers performed the most delicate tooling, to a Rabelaisian flow of coarse humor and honest wit. And the books that came from that bindery had thereafter another flavor.

Their present adventure was to be of a different kind, but still it was to have the stamp of belonging to the life they were leading. The poet, remotely at first, was beginning to catch the savor of this love of the organic, this passion for weaving the parts of his daily life into a broad pattern, and this tying in of loose threads. The old glitter of disconnected change and variety lost, for moments, its charm. At times he laid it reluctantly to the recession of his youth—and perhaps it was age that was changing him. But at other times he could wish that his youth itself had squandered itself less in disconnected change and variety—had built itself in more structurally. And in such moods he lent himself more reliantly to his older companion, who, in revenge, never seemed to him old, but rather to have kept a quiet zest of youth about him.

He sat now with the smile of anticipation in his eye.

"All we shall need in our scrip," he said, "is a single curiosity. If it was taste that Madame started with, had it any relation to art?"

"Where shall you take me?"

"Into the most curious places in the world."

It was autumn and the season was on. Exhibits were opened, concerts and operas were beginning, coteries were eager with the summer's

arrears of novelties. A new Russian dancer was being widely announced. Two Russian novelists had just been translated. From France came word of a revolutionary school of painting. A colossal symphony was to come from Vienna interpreting the gist of Nietzsche's philosophy. The great universities were announcing the growth of amateur play-acting, amateur story-writing, and æsthetic dancing, in place of intellectual studies. *Vers libre* was bringing in a wholly new group of poets. The season indeed promised to be lively in æsthetic circles.

The two friends set out. They missed nothing. Their experiences accumulated. Before the end of the autumn something began to emerge—it was the comedy of their pursuit. They admitted that if it had not emerged they would have had to desist before they came to the point. They saw indeed much that was good; some things that were noble. But their concern was not primarily with objects of art; it was with the human spectacle. And the human spectacle in those purlieus repaid them.

The poet developed a new note in his laughter. It crept in first one night as he saw the solemnity with which two avid-eyed young poets watched the lithe, slim body of the Russian dancer, and took what went on inside them for their souls. A kind of sickness had already mingled with his laugh at their murmured confidences; it was with horror that he heard them, in fervid tones, quote a couplet of his own:

**Oh, dusty, impure question — Is she pure?
It is enough that she is beautiful.**

When he dared he stole a look at his companion; he hoped that the murmurs had passed him unheard, or the lines been unrecognized. But he could glean nothing from the serene countenance by his side.

Surreptitiously one day he looked into the two Russian novelists. Something had come over him; they had the Russian quality, but they amused him. Once that Russian poignancy had set up a great tumult in his emotions, and like the two poets in the balcony, he had used to discover soul in that tumult. This time as he read he seemed to catch the secret of it. Multitudinous, formless, stormy, hopeless, they saw life with their keen, barbaric senses and nothing more. Their stuff was not ordered, intellectualized. It meant nothing; and they could make nothing of it. It was a welter.

In his own poetry, following the great tradition, he knew that his pain and labor had been, for all his vacuous protest, to make intelligible, to interpret. Even in the couplet that he groaned to remember he had tried to reinterpret the significance of beauty. He might like to blot those particular lines — would give a good deal to just now — but their intention had been a significant intention. These somber minds, however, understood nothing, put nothing in order, tried to put nothing in order, gloried in their tumultuous disarray. They rendered up the chaos, not because they understood

it, but because it was there. They lugged it out, not to say something true about it, but to heap it up and gloom around in their hopeless helplessness before it.

He smiled as he welcomed the sudden release from his old obsession. He felt in himself a sudden peace in the clarity of his understanding. And he smiled again, partly at himself, and partly at the simplicity of the perception—that peace came just from the escape from chaos, just from the understanding, the putting things in order. He caught, consciously for the first time, the point of literature.

He had not thought it all out before a new experience sent the two friends wandering through the streets in comfortable release from an evening of local chaos of their own. They had gone together to a dinner at an artistic and literary house. They had been charmed by the simple beauty of the interior, the costumes of the ladies, the appointments of linen and crystal and silver of the dining room, the rich draperies and pictures and rugs of the drawing room. At dinner the talk had begun. The poet felt uncomfortable. The Russian novelists, the colossal symphony interpreting Nietzsche, the cubists, the futurists, *vers libre*, went into the crucible of talk and came out glowing. Strauss's "wrangling inharmonies," Matisse's "tremendous barbarities," futurist "mysteries" fell from cultured lips without the smile of judgment. They were the "movement of art."

There was the charm of exclamation, of enthusiasm, of bandied allusion, of soft lights, of

modulated voices, of the near presence of an author and a sculptor. But the poet was uncomfortable. He suddenly saw it from the outside. He saw it with his understanding. For a moment he could regret the brightly colored land of illusion and irresponsibility he was leaving. It was endeared by so nearly everything that endears. And he was quitting it for a drab land of disillusionment and responsibility. He wondered for a moment why he was going. Then he knew that he couldn't help it. Back of his senses and his delights there was something else that understood and smiled. And that something else was *he*.

What supported him over the moment of regret was the shocking recollection that it was just in such circles as these that all the horrors of the Russian novelists, and frantic French decadence, and German unintelligibility got their passport. Here at least art had not done the thing that he had always defended it for doing. It had not created a sure taste for beauty even in matters simply artistic. And as for those other, wider values of taste — as for Madame's . . .

"It isn't beauty we're after now," someone was saying near him. "We've changed all that. What we're after is reality."

He had heard that implicitly said a hundred times before; now he listened with wonder. He remembered the Russian novelists with a vengeance.

Once or twice in the course of the evening he caught his friend's eye, lonely, observant, reflective, amused. He himself had turned away, his sensitiveness to what was going on around him

heightened to the point of pain. Finally he hunted him out, and when they decently could they departed.

Once on the moonlit street he got his arm under that of his companion and turned him toward one of their old haunts by the lake. He was in no mood for loneliness or sleep.

It was an Indian summer night, crystal above, and a thin haze among the tree-trunks and over the meadows of the park. For half a mile they walked in silence. Then the poet laughed.

"After all," he said, "these people are only caricatures of the real thing."

"The air *is* better here," his friend returned. After a moment, pausing by the wooded edge of a lagoon, he asked, "Are those Lombardy poplars or cypresses?" and waved his hand toward a row of slender trees that shot up out of the mist into the clear moonlight above.

"I don't know; they are beautiful."

They stood a moment watching them, and then passed on.

"Why beautiful?" the older man mused.

"I don't know. Once I could have given you mystic reasons. To-night I don't know. All I can say is that they are beautiful."

"Aesthetics, then?"

"It seems a little too simple, but you found the trees beautiful?"

"Yes."

"I dare say most men would."

"Well?"

"Well, perhaps that is *æsthetics*."

"You are humble to-night."

The poet laughed. "I've been humbled," he said. "I've been in such company before — been part of it — and now I've seen it. What I can't help seeing is that it's just the people brought up on art that are wishing on us all these things that aren't beautiful. It hasn't given them taste."

"Perhaps those things are beautiful to them."

"If they are, then æsthetics is anything — and nothing — whatever you like."

"That is what you have just said about the trees."

"No. When I spoke I was thinking about men by and large, to-day and yesterday — of something with a touch of universality — not anything that anybody likes at any time, but something that lies deeper, is more fundamental — something based on their common sense of the thing. Do I talk cant?"

"No. But you go in a circle."

"Not that all men have it," the poet spun on, "or even most men, but some men."

He paused. The other was silent, attentive; in his eye was a gleam of appreciative irony.

"From this point on I stumble," the poet continued, a touch of hopeless humor struggling in his voice. "I know what I mean by beauty; I know what I think is beautiful. I know that I fall in with certain others, love what they love. And that is what I praise. Other things I hate; I abhor Matisse. Well, I dare say Matisse hates what I love, and in general uses my own language to justify himself and condemn me, *mutatis mutandis*."

Does it get me anywhere to say that the best taste is that which refines on the common sense of beauty of the race. At least it indicates a standard and a direction. It isn't quite anarchy. But what is clear about the present is that we have a prodigious art and it *is* anarchic, and a prodigious æsthetic public brought up on it, and it doesn't make for beauty."

They had come to the lake shore and had adjusted themselves on a bench. The moon lay shattered on the rough water, and the pebbles grated with the rush and recession of the waves on the sloping beach at their feet. But the poet's mind was preoccupied. Suddenly he looked up.

"I have said that now for the third time," he laughed. "And Madame, I begin to believe, didn't belong to æsthetic circles."

They hung in assent upon that for a while, and the silence and the warm night, and the wind and the waves and the moonlight were glorious about them.

"But the real thing," the older man said at last, "— aren't you a little hard on the real thing?"

"There's something to be said for that," the other returned. "I get a glimpse here, now, that I don't quite catch clearly. It's a glimpse of art as a kind of final product, a last expression, of whatever taste we *have*, — a kind of ultimate flower —"

"Hence the fluttering of our infinite butterflies," the older man threw in.

"Ah," the other smiled. "And perhaps they have their use in spreading the pollen. But I don't like to see it all left in their hands."

"Whose then?"

"There we are!" the poet exclaimed. "We shall have to think it out."

There was their point. They laughed. The poet threw in one more phrase:

"In relation to all the other things they so egregiously don't think about at all."

There was another matter that had dropped by the way, and the older man, with his uneasiness at the consciousness of untied threads, reverted to it.

"We have left Madame unexplained," he said.

"And I dare say we shall, even in the end," the poet replied, "but we've rescued her from the æstheticists."

"And ourselves. But there's something else. I go back always to your conception of the soul. And I can't help thinking that if Madame had had a fish shop instead of her restaurant she would still have solved her problem, by virtue of something else in her that we should not have been tempted to call æsthetic — a satisfaction to some inner demand in her nature — some other preference of her soul — that somehow she had caught a glimpse of and fostered until she would have been unhappy to thwart it. Whether in some transcendental sense you wish to call the ultimate attractiveness of that impulse *æsthetic* —"

"Ah," the poet interposed, "but with that range of attractiveness art has nothing to do. You involve us with Croce and the decadent philosophers."

"And there we are at last," his friend returned.

As they wandered homeward through the dim park our friend remembered how in his youth an

older friend of his had said words that had clarified his own vision, and how he had come afterwards at midnight to the lake shore and sat on the bench they had but now quitted, to calm and adjust his dizzy thoughts. And now, as he looked at the poet, whose friendly arm was linked in his, he wondered hopefully whether he himself had not at last, and in his own way, handed on the torch.

PART TWO

I

POOR RICHARD

LONG afterwards, in the desultory reading of his more settled years, he came one day upon a passage that set him in pursuit of his own childhood. In the raucous comedy of his adolescence, in the later years of his sophomoric militancy, and in the unheroic dullness of middle life, that childhood had never for long failed to come flashing back upon him at inexplicable moments, from unexpected sensations too faint to have caught for themselves his reflective attention. Yellow sunlight falling through trees upon a wall; vague odors in a country lane of a summer afternoon; the luminous blue that sometimes whitens the sky at the horizon on a windy morning; a moment's harmony of thirds in voices or instruments at random windows or in the droning tones of street organs — such sensations, without reason of exceptional beauty or traceable reminiscence brought back to him for lingering half hours the limpid emotions of his boyhood.

At such moments, so affecting were the contrasts with the grayer tones of his current life that he clung to his vision with eagerness, with a romantic sense that there was something infinitely desirable

in the innocence and purity of his childhood's outlook. He had seemed of late to be losing, through the hardening sophistication of time, deep and moving and intimate values that thought and knowledge were bringing no adequate compensations for. His more normal moments tried to reassure him; but he mistrusted his more normal moments, knowing that they knew nothing of the magic of his occasional moments. The inner conviction of reality that intensified these emotions never haunted his hours of objective thought.

So it came about that his childhood clung to his consciousness with a persistence that he did nothing to discourage; and though as the years went on the flashes of the old light fell less and less frequently on the world that he looked out upon, he still had occasional glimpses of it to thrill him and darken the moments of commonplace return.

It was with curious eyes, therefore, that he came one day upon the record of the life of a child who had died at "5 yeares and 3 days old onely . . . a prodigy for wit and understanding," and whose story had come down over a gap of nearly three centuries because the father, who had paused over his affairs to drop a tear "of grief and affliction," was that courtly diarist of an age so peculiarly remote from ours — John Evelyn. The record was the more moving that the grief with which the few lines were penned seemed so largely irrelevant. The pathos to modern hearts seemed to lie not so much in the loss of what the father mourned, as in the thought that it was there at all to be lost.

For "at 2 yeares and halfe old he could per-

fectly read any of the English, Latine, French, or Gothic letters, pronouncing the three first languages exactly. He had before the 5th yeare, or in that yeare . . . got by heart almost the entire vocabularie of Latine and French primitives and words, could make congruous syntax, turn Latin into English and *vice versa*, construe and prove what he read, and did the government and use of relatives, verbs, substantives, elipses, and many figures and tropes — made considerable progress in Comenius's Janua . . . and had a strong passion for Greeke. The number of verses he could recite was prodigious, and what he remembered of the parts of playes. He understood the historical parts of the Bible and New Testament to a wonder. He was far from childish in anything he said or did."

Poor little Richard, "incomparable hopeful blossom!"

And yet the reader of this sad record, conscious of a childhood of his own so unspeakably different, and wont to regret the loss of just those things that had made it so different, found himself out of all wont, through a perverse habit of mind, looking back at his own so much happier case with no little doubts.

It had indeed been a childhood rich in the things that are thought of as peculiar to childhood. The little town in which he had been born was spread out upon long hills in a country half forested and half tilled, broken into small woods and fields like the background of an old print. He could see from the hilltop of his own world a broad shallow

valley and hills beyond, blocked with color and set with the half-hidden gleaming white houses peculiar to that countryside. He remembered it always in the high colors of spring and fall, and always in sunshine.

The town itself — to him big, menacing, alluring, to be invaded for short distances, and to be fled from in terror till the click of the gate shut it out behind him — lay beneath his hilltop in clear and bright hues. Its cobblestones, swept and garnished, its tall spires, its crowding trees, made up a magic region seen from within the gate, prolific of benevolent peddlers whose great carts at a gesture sprang open to reveal sesamic treasures exchangeable for worthless heaps of rags and papers; of strange terrifying dogs of another race than the kindly and understanding mongrel of his own world; of damp and jocularly clad fishmongers whose stirring horns summoned a wrapped and capped population to morning gossip at the gutter; of rare organ grinders whose droning pipes, nearing and retreating, fused with the lazy colors of the afternoon.

Behind the walls of his own world his most bizarre relationships were with trees. Touches of human expression in them caught in him quick responses. There was a dwarfed oak whose angularity was touched with pathos by a friendly, deprecating way it had of holding out its large, frank leaves; a dandified maple that cradled long his ambitions and at last his scratched and trembling body; an eccentric, reserved russet apple tree that stood aloof from the common ram-

bows and guarded the stable door. If such interpretations were childish he was indeed a child, and long custom gave to them a kind of reasonableness that he had no wish to refute.

There was something less explicable but more moving in the sharp impressiveness of a deep and gloomy grove that lay beyond the cobblestones across the way. In the morning when a low sun fell upon its front it held only such terrors as might with high courage be defied to the edge of the shadows. He remembered one such adventure when he had fought off his fear even beyond the sunlight, and though he had failed at the last moment to bring off the precious buckeye that had lured him so far — for terror seized him while his fingers were still short of the prize — his experience served to rationalize the situation for his future guidance. Thereafter of a morning he could walk without fear to the edge of the dense shade, knowing that fear was powerless to come upon him across the barrier. And if he taunted it with its impotence as he strutted up and down the irregular line, his temerity was not without a defiant courage against the possible moment when a passing cloud might wipe out the bounds and leave him in its clutches.

Sunset was the time, however, when the grove assumed its most fascinating terrors, when the still-bright sky behind it left it black and impenetrable. To his ear, on windless evenings, came strange, subdued movements, subtle treads, soft whisperings, filling the grove with the undefined manifestations of the objective thing that he had never

wholly distinguished from his subjective fear. The grove was the haunt of owls whose evening awakenings filled the darkness with mysterious questions; and with brooding doves whose notes near and far seemed to come from no separate source, but rather to be the mournful voice of the woods themselves.

By no means all of his hours were spent so essentially alone as was inevitable in the presence of such moving perceptions. His world behind the high, vine-hung walls of the garden was, naturally it seemed to him, the gathering place for others from without. But in some ways, in spite of brothers and of neighbors of his own age, just as he found a difference between his own and the outer world, he discovered a difference between himself and those around him more subtle than the common daily difference, and sharply separative even when they were boisterously present about him. Sometimes when they were closest he would find a barrier shutting him in most narrowly. It was exaggerated, extreme, but it foreshadowed the faculty that later played its determining part in his life.

Suddenly when the play was lulled there would come over him a troubling sense of inner isolation. The stones, the grass about him, the companions whom he could touch with his hand, his own body, and the heat of the sun or the cool of the breeze, the sounds and odors that came to him clearly, seemed but the dream-spun creations of his thought, illusions that no test of the senses could dispel. His senses themselves were in no better



case. Even his thoughts, projecting the outer world before him, became objective presences before an ultimate consciousness that he always came to at last before the bubble of his troubled perceptions broke.

When this illusion of an illusion had passed and the world about him had resumed its external reality he had no wish and no power to bring it back. That it was an illusion he felt with all the clarity of his more normal moments. In time such rare moments ceased to trouble him, but the recollection of them never so wholly departed that he lost the sense of an aloof consciousness from which to look out even upon his own thoughts and feelings.

The occasions that were most likely to bring such imaginings were otherwise curiously intimate. There lay in the midst of the garden a broad flat stone covering the mouth of an ancient well, and its afternoon coolness in the shade of a low syringa no doubt conduced to the invention of a form of play unusually sociable. To fill their pockets in their journeys into the outer world with lumps of colored sandstone; to search for days among the gravel for precious "keels"; and then to sit on the well-stone in a circle of five or six, and grind, stone upon stone, hour upon hour of a summer's afternoon, watching their cones of colored sand grow tall, and tinting them with the powdery dust of the "keels"—such was their favorite pastime. And in those hours to talk out of depths of innocence and ignorance! They had seen five or six or seven winters, and their world was a small garden on the edge of a small town. And yet they

talked of history and politics, of wars and parties. If a maturer cynicism would have found no contradiction there, finding no need of knowledge or experience for endless talk or bitter partisanship, it would here have been disarmed by the innocence of the malice from which such animation arose. A powderhorn from Revolutionary days, and a sword from the Civil War, hanging in the paternal hallway near the portraits of the ancestors to whom they had been grim enough instruments of fight, had stirred their imaginations and kindled their loyalties. In their hearts, still too tender to hurt a robin or a toad, it was a secret grief that the spots of stain and rust were not from the blood of their enemies. And the names *British* and *Rebel* gave whispering intensity to hours of peaceful grinding.

To his later amused reflections the thought that politics had stolen into the garden and laid its shadow upon their minds seemed an incongruous touch upon the idyllic aloofness of his childhood. But he knew that in reality it had hardly been so — that the bare names of parties about which their talk had played had had no content, were but stirring connotations calling for loyalty and hostility — much perhaps as in the grown-up world — and not unfit for association with that other connotation which they called God. They had not seemed incongruous then, and the association was made promptly and loyally. God was a Republican.

Though his childhood was perhaps unusually full of companionship — of children, of servants,



whose work never ceased to seem to him some superior form of play, of the whole range of relatives, from the visiting ones of his own years in eternally clean frocks, to the reverend elder whose prodigious hat and gold-headed cane seemed the very crown and scepter of life—the moments which most colored his later reveries were the moments when he was most alone. He was not lonely or melancholy. It was perhaps that in unwonted silences his mind caught best the faint responses of his own spirit.

It was in such moments that the clear brightness of colors stole upon his conscious senses—the deeper tones of the garden, the contrasts of the grove against the sunset, the harmonies of the outlook across the town and the hills, and perhaps more than all the cloudless sky, remote, varied, eternal, without detail of distracting substance, the essence of the emotion of color. It was to the purity of such perceptions that his later moments made their magic return, adding to their own effectiveness the deeper note of reminiscence, and binding his life together in a cumulative pattern of sensuous emotion.

Though his life was thus largely healthfully out of doors the house too was rich for him, though in a different way. There were characteristic colors there too, indeed, and he never lost the moving sense of atmospheres that breathed from the harmonies of subdued light in certain well-loved rooms—particularly a library in whose deep-orange draperies and rugs, brown leather chairs,

and brown books, he never in after years ceased to find the spirit of leisurely reading — warmth, and quiet, and a calm cheerfulness. Often when the sun of a late winter afternoon began to sink and yellow in the west and blend with the warm tones of the draperies, he would come hither, and unconscious of the causes that at once stirred and soothed him, would sit in quiet, watching the deepening colors till the growing darkness brought imaginings more in keeping with the house itself.

He had his shrinkings from the dark when it found him lingering over his play in the garden; but his fears there were simple and direct — frank terror of the invisible and the unknown. Within, however, when the light faded and the quiet robbed his senses of their immediate occupations and assurances, the invisible became populous with a curious company of silent, recurrent figures, habitues of his half-frightened, half-fascinated fancy. They took possession of their accustomed spots and bound him to his accustomed chair — old people for the most part, with white hair and thin white hands, seated by the fireplace or standing in reverie by the windows; the tall figure of a priest forever mounting the stairway to the silent chambers above, and through the rooms a woman moving to and fro in stately sorrow. In time repetition eased his fears and gave his awe a touch of friendliness, but it never eased the weight of an undefined sadness that hovered over that silent household.

It must have been — so his maturer reason went — that the darkness gave too sharp a sensi-

tiveness to his imagination, and that the broad lines of his first fanciful pictures were too vivid to be escaped from again. At all events his imagination worked more normally and subtly and with much more variety by day, though it worked with much the same materials. Out of what old pictures in books or on the walls, old costumes in attic chests, slow reminiscences of elders by the winter fire, his imagery was pieced, his later memories found scattered though incomplete traces. But it is certain that in the house by day when the others were absent, or quiet, or better still in distant rooms in murmuring conversation, his mind was filled with pleasant pictures of a life varied, full, quite different from his own, and always changing.

They never ceased to be fancies. But they had more than the thin evanescence of his out-door play. They were clothed with reality, and with an authority that he respected to at least this degree — that if he let his fancy play within doors it was they who had the right to people it. Out of doors his fancy was gothic, filled with dwarfs and talking birds and animate stones. There there was no restraint upon him. But within he was rigidly humane. The house itself gave the suggestion for this difference, no doubt, and he followed the law it imposed. It was old and homely, and filled with the simple accumulation of more than one generation of his ancestors. It was a house, and so a human product, and his response was to act in kind. Many years later, searching seriously among his tastes and preferences, he found a complete and vivid ideal of a quiet and full domesticity whose

axiomatic values went back for their sanction to these early fanciful responses to the spirit of the house.

His childhood lasted on much these terms until his thirteenth or fourteenth year. There was growth and development, it is true, but in kind it remained little changed. It was a healthy childhood, and if there was a more than usual dreaminess and objective make-believe there was in that no distorting asymmetry. He was frankly and pleasantly undeluded by his fancies. And it was a very natural childhood in the full modern sense of that term. If he had learned good manners it had been less by precept than by having nothing else to imitate. No doubt he had had his moments of wilfulness that were punished, and of selfishness that were rebuked. But they were less significant than the unconscious influence of a kindly home.

In the early part of his childhood he was taught nothing consciously. If he learned his letters in his fifth year it was the accidental reflection of an elder brother's learning, picked up as he had picked up the names of colors among the stones and "keels" of his play, or as he had picked up the syllables from the backs of the Britannica on the library shelves before he could read in his primer, and with no sense of their significance. The library, where he spent long hours of winter afternoons, and where indeed he listened to readings that flashed strange pictures upon his mind, had no distinct meaning for him. He took the books there for granted. They were among the natural conditions of existence, like the house and the garden.

In the latter half of his childhood he went to school, it is true, but school came to him in the natural course of events, just as he fell into the way of the immemorial games that children have never let die. There was nothing in his going that savored either of compulsion or privilege. And in the school there was nothing to reveal the sharp change, for which the school stands, from barbarism to urbanity. For the modern kindly methods of teaching had already begun to displace the older harsh tyranny of the traditional schoolmaster. He glided into the precincts of learning, therefore, on the wings of play. He learned without knowing that he learned. And his school hours, like those in the garden, were happily spontaneous. He had not, to be sure, fallen heir to the full development of this sympathetic method. And before the end of his childhood he encountered rebelliously enough teachers who derived from the older traditions. Defeat, chagrin, and his first suffocation sense of impotence before tyranny came upon him memorably from these experiences; but they were too rare to break his spirited opposition or alter his long-confirmed attitude toward the school. He remained to the time of his adolescence a child of play.

So it was that years later, when his habits of make-believe had turned insensibly into habits of reflection and reverie, he could look back upon a childhood peculiarly natural and spontaneous. It was a childhood unusually happy, and though commonplace in its environment and external equipment and not uncommon in its internal tempera-

ment and native gifts, yet of its kind and in itself rarely perfect.

It was with troubling surprise, therefore, that he found himself not so wholly shocked as it seemed to him he should have been at the pitiful record of that child of the older century, who had died at "5 yeares and 3 days old onely, after considerable progress in Comenius's Janua and with a strong passion for Greeke." It seemed to him that he ought to have looked with horror upon a code that could permit such a life and cause such a death. Instead he began to have doubts of the code that had guided his own first years. It had always been a matter of thankfulness with him that his childhood was beyond the reach of circumstance, and would remain for him perfect no matter what untoward straits he might fall into. And now an ironic fate, changing his point of view, told him that neither his childhood nor anything past, present, or future, was beyond the reach of circumstance. He felt no bitterness. His childhood still shed its moving and illuminating reflections upon his present. But reflectively, and with the calmer emotions that go with the rational perceptions, he came to see a curious waste running through it.

His old sense of its value was indeed still positive. It was, he still saw, a perfect childhood, from the point of view of childhood; and he never ceased to have moments of protest that this tenderly luminous and rich thing should be anything less than an end in itself—should be a means to an end grosser and tougher than itself—should

need therefore to be twisted out of its own bent to serve as a beginning for something less delicately appealing and less perfectible. But he knew that childhood was not the end of life in point of purpose any more than in point of time; and though he gave over the attempt to define that purpose, he knew that the most romantic, though they had been known to put it to a child to solve, had never attained even to that wisdom until they had ceased irrevocably to be children.

So it was that though he was touched with a half angered pity when he came one day upon the grief-stricken words of that courtly father mourning the death of a child who had been so "far from childish in anything he said or did," he saw a little way past his own prejudice to something that lay behind the shocking cruelty of that little tragedy. He saw it perhaps the more readily in recollection of the violent shifting and tossing and aimless pain of his own later years of adolescence, and the helplessness of his youth. For he saw that however exaggerated was the case of poor Richard Evelyn, it had been animated by an idea perhaps nearer the truth than the idea of his own. It had looked forward. It had looked forward to something that he came strongly to realize the lack of in his own mature spirit. And when he glanced thoughtfully about him, nation wide, at his own generation, brought up in ways not very different from his own, he saw that they too had missed it.

This sense of loss took objective expression for him in the commonly observed lack of poetry of his time and people. But this lack seemed to him

significant of something larger. It was itself more than an objective lack to be deplored. And it was not to be explained by the garish newness of his country. When his country had been newer still it had been richer in just that thing. What he detected in himself and in the intellectual quality of the times was a lack of that richness of consciousness and that clarity and simplicity of vision that finds its expression sometimes in poetry but is essentially the same for the deepest and justest thought upon human affairs in whatever form.

This observation, which he had long shared indeed as a commonplace with many thoughtful observers of American life, came now into a new association in his mind. His childhood had been typical, typical at least in the influences that had formed it. And he saw something in those influences that it seemed not fanciful to connect with his own and his country's deficiency. He himself had had a strong impulse toward poetry. It had been dogged enough, and had kept him in his later years tied to his poets, his prosody, his tropes, his diffident exercise book, long enough to have caused him a mild and humorous surprise at the meagerness of his output — a meagerness not so much of bulk as of substance.

He was not looking for genius in himself; he was looking for pedestrian respectability. But when he came to write he had nothing respectable to say. The flashes from his childhood that came upon him, intense and simple, luminous with the lyric essence, brought with the force of their impulse and the limpid clarity of their outlook nothing

to look upon. His perceptions had played, in those younger years, upon a substance which maturity could never broaden or deepen. The moments when his young spirit had first entered his perceptions had been occupied with matter which his growing mind could never expand — sounds and odors, forms and colors which were the same to his childhood as they would ever be to his youth and his age.

And they had determined his deepest preoccupations. These preoccupations had intensified wastefully only the changeless uniform perceptions, the common intuitions of sense for which the single word suffices — things static, impenetrable to thought, useless alike to the discursive reason and to the significant element of poetic expression. His childhood years had spent their lyric enlightenment upon the simple bodily sensations, and not upon those moving relations that range in the human field and give to the objects of sense that significance that makes them humane.

The result was a poetry like most of the poetry of his age and country, a poetry not without a certain visual charm and grace in the concrete elements, but in its thought either vapid or else crudely expository. Actually his best fell far below the best of its time, but it had the contemporary quality. There was one set of stanzas that he had long saved, at first for extraneous reasons, and afterwards for the completeness with which they seemed to express the wistful, sweetly nostalgic thinness of his typical culture.

Here, long leagues from the burdened town
Where memories crowd and fret,
Leagues along on the trackless down
Let us wander and forget.

How were we to remember here
Tidings of yesterday,
Where the June winds, sweeping the heavens clear
Of flocking cloud and smoke-rack drear,
Drive the soul's mists away?

Had we not ere last year's seeds were sown
Wailed ills now suffered not?
Shall we not ere this year's seeds are strown
To-day's ills have forgot?

Were it not enough that the warm June wind
Play in your tangled hair?
Were it not enough in the grass to find
Starry daisies and rue entwined
With phlox for your tresses fair?

Shall we lament while the shepherd sun,
That has shone for his shepherd lovers
Since old Theocritus' race was run,
High in his June flight hovers?

Can we think back to the first spring days
On the boon of life and the years —
The boon of the taste of life — and gaze
In our hearts where a deathless minstrel plays
His fresh and young and eternal lays,
And still shed present tears?

Here on the leagues of the trackless earth
The warring will is merged

Into the Mother that gave it birth,
By a thousand voices urged —

The querulous cry of the land-lost tern
Vain-searching for the sea,
Rock nooks where tiger lilies burn,
The shaded damp of the maiden fern,
Wild rose scents where we may discern
Nature's sweet alchemy.

Here where the waist-high thistle vaunts
His sky-kissed purple flame,
Here where the mullein's high shaft taunts
Primrose of sad sweet name,

How were we, where the crocus first
Broke through the runneled snow,
And where the proud shy violet erst
Forth on the high March noonday burst,
To renew our meed of woe?

And you, love, when your dreaming eyes
Lift yearning to the sun,
Does not your soul lose its own emprise,
Its own impatience, its own surmise,
And feel at rest with the earth and the skies,
With the universe at one?

Here, then, leagues from the troubled town
With its ceaseless surge and fret,
Leagues along on the trackless down
Let us wander, and forget.

There it was, simple, sensuous, rhythmic — in-
stinct with the accessories and perfectly innocent
of significance.

When at last he had come to realize that the end

of maturity was not merely to thrill in his childhood fashion at the intensity of his perceptions, but rather to find the human significance of them, he did indeed turn his mind from this fruitless exercise to thought itself. And though he suspected himself of lacking even in his logical processes a foundation that an earlier start might have afforded him, it was not so much that he was not able to think logically as that his thinking was in a way hard and geometrical. It lacked in a certain mellow harmony of reason and emotion, a full richness and depth, a lyric illumination, that he knew was the essence of the deepest humane expression. If he could have transferred to his intellection the moving intensity that his childhood had cast upon his sense perceptions, he knew that his poetry and his thinking could have had a value that he was powerless to bring to them now. He saw that however intense that childhood's preoccupation had made his sensuous thrill, that intensity was now incommunicable, and so wasted.

His childhood had gone all in one direction. It had enriched and intensified certain apprehensions through the intimacy with which they had been woven into the very texture of his spirit; and those apprehensions were with him yet, more intimately than any other later acquisitions could ever be. But they were futile. They were not of the stuff of manhood. His manhood had gone, perforce, and because it was manhood, all in the other direction. It had had to begin over. It had had to acquire all its substance anew. For the stuff of manhood could hardly be the emotional intensity

of a perception of blue sky, of autumn browns and yellows, of thrilling odors, and of sweet sounds. He knew that there was something still childish in the dulcet cadences of even the noblest celebrations of those perceptions for their own sakes — often in Wordsworth, sometimes in Keats, and less worthily in most of the poetasters of the present. There was need for a little more iron in the poet's soul.

The thing was that the romantic naturalists were all for leaving out of the story the one thing that was to give the story its point. And he had grown up under the shadow of their wings. They were all for what was natural; and what they called natural was the thing that was spontaneous. His own point of rebellion, however, was that the significant thing about life lay in what men had made of it. And what men had made of it — accumulated in the records of what had been nobly thought and done in the past — was just what by being so charmingly natural and spontaneous, he had so far, and for long thereafter, so wholly missed.

But these things, though he had later set himself to acquire them consciously and with untiring interest, could never, he knew, and in the event never did, become bone of his bone. They never became of the very texture of his thought, the form of his mind, as they must have become before he could have been specifically a poet, or, lacking that genius, have attained to that richness of consciousness that lies behind the subtle mastery of the best that life has to offer to the heart and to the mind. They never became the intimate stuff of his spirit.



Not that he would have brought back the era that had been so harsh to poor Richard Evelyn. That age had had its excesses as evil perhaps as his own. He cherished still the positive values of his spontaneous freedom. But he could not forget the quick sensitiveness of his responses to whatever vague rumors of the human past had filtered down to him — from sword and powderhorn, pictures, old costumes, stories, the talk of elders, the atmosphere of the house, to which he had reacted with visual presentments with all the humane spirit he had. He could not forget that this sensitiveness to what was humane might have been fed with what was significant as well as with what was insignificant, calculated instead of casual, and might have been informed instead of left formless. And he could not forget that even the school, when it came to take over the task, did little to alter the way of his mind that his childhood had set him out upon, confirming the natural impression of such a childhood that from the casualness of play with the visual objects around him should arise the things of value out of which his maturity should be made.

It was with such thoughts, then, that he came to catch, behind the harshness of that age that had seemed so hard upon its children and so productive of poets, something of its animating spirit. The old severity, which had been too stern in its excess for that incomparable blossom of the Restoration, had had a heart, though it had had a mind also. For it knew that though the child lost little of the glamor of childhood no matter what

its preoccupations, having the power to color whatever it touched with its own luminous and endearing atmosphere, the man's thoughts would be forever more enlightened, more rich, more subtle, if the indurating discipline of the child's preoccupations had been bent from the first upon the things that his maturity would find of the supremest value.

As it was, the illumination that so intensified the magic of those rare moments when the light of his childhood flashed back upon him never animated the substance of his maturer reflections, never gave them that inner conviction of reality that breathed a spirit into the inanimate world of his sensuous perceptions. He had lost something forever.

II

THE AWKWARD AGE

HIS early youth was curious, and yet typical. It had none of the serenity of his childhood; it was marred by an April suddenness, a March violence; it was abrupt, explosive, extravagant. It came upon him with strange and disturbing signs. In his earlier days, in the simplicity of his outlook, his mind for all its occasional harkenings to the voice of his spirit had been singularly free from any consciousness of itself. Experience and feeling had glided into experience and feeling with unquestioning calm; and though he had often reacted vigorously, like a healthy animal, to the immediate push of his surroundings, his consciousness had been direct and naïve. It had been troubled neither with the larger bearings of his problems nor with the new and tyrannous stirrings of conscious emotion.

Then suddenly these stirrings came upon him. They roiled the clear shallows of his spirit. New voices spoke to him inarticulately, and he had no experience of how to answer them and no terms in which to ask for help. Disconcerting tears sprang into his eyes from feelings of which he knew the force and the depth, but whose nature was strange and sometimes terrifying.

It was a period in which his spirit welled up and overflowed. He needed channels and curbs, and channels and curbs were just what his typical breeding had eschewed. The overflow found no driving current to clarify its waters. It stood creaming and mantling, stagnant and clogged. Twenty lines of Homer a day — anything hard and regular and humane — might have put firm ground under his feet. A touch of the birch might have taught him that some mental things were as damnable as some moral things. But he had no Homer and no birch. He mooned, callowly, hours on end.

In other respects the first years of his youth were a time endeared to his later humor by the pathos of their awkwardness, their flounderings, their rebellious sincerities. A sudden disconcerting self-consciousness broke in upon him. His boyhood habits were at a loss. Like his voice that broke suddenly between bass and childish treble, his manner broke between jaunty assurance and helpless childish tears. He was restless. He did not know how to control his new being. His spirit was awkward — all hands and feet. He was ashamed. And he disguised his softest and most radiant moments in strident noise. There were times when he was all activity, filling the house with clamor, or, rebelliously disobedient, wandering from home in forbidden company. At other times he spent his hours in the house over books that he did not understand, proudly conscious of family councils solicitous for his bodily health. He picked up strange, harmless oaths and uttered them

at calculated moments. He began to launch upon the dinner table, not the artless chatter of events, but sudden bombs of opinion. His course began an uncertain diagonal across the grooves of his childhood, and the friction rasped but interested him. He was stirred by his rough jolting. His new course seemed inexplicably right though he could find no defense for it. His impotence and irritation when he was put to it to justify his defiant opinions developed a phrase that came to be, in its petulant iteration, characteristic of his whole boyhood. "I protest!" he would cry, prefacing a dictum that seemed to him rebelliously true; and when amused elders pointed out the humor of his invariable protestation, his spirit cried out from still greater depths his rebellious "I protest!"

There was no conscious pathos and no softness in his rebellion. It was militant, noisy, crude. It was irrational even to his own perception, and not of a kind to win understanding from others. But it was not morose or brooding. He had over him a watchful parental sympathy, and though this was personal and patient rather than actively critical and corrective, it saved him from morbidity. He was never wholly turned in upon himself. And there was enough laughter in him and in them to keep him healthy. Like his childhood, however, his youth was left to its spontaneous courses. And when the explosions came that marked the moments of his growth he was helpless enough before their energy, and bewildered enough in the regions where they left him.

The first of the explosions that marred his youth

struck at him deeply. In his childhood the church had been one of the normal unquestioned conditions of life, perhaps the more that his own grandfather, in surplice and bands, had warmed the mystery of the weekly service with his kindly face and familiar voice. From his earliest years the name of God had been on his tongue with the simple, frank familiarity of household acquaintance, and accepted with the same simple faith with which he had accepted the deeds and dangers of unseen ancestors. The weekly service, its constant association with his grandfather, the nightly prayer, had worn therefore a deep groove in his mind. It was but natural that in the sudden expansion of his feelings and the mystic deepening of his perceptions the touch of infinity in the thought of God should have stirred him deeply.

In the humbling immensity of a starry night the skies, no longer flat and one, but many, and near and far, flashed on his imagination their immanent mystery. They would have done so of their own suggestion, but it was there too that in the cosmology of his traditions he placed that other mystery with whose articulate symbolism his churchly associations had made him long familiar. And on the azure background beyond the uttermost stars his fancy traced the faint entrancing imagery of heaven, like evanescent etchings on the blue depths of steel. Without deceiving him it was still very real, perhaps the more that here the new reach of his emotions could play without restraint and his new hunger could be richly fed. At night when the quiet of the household promised seclusion he

would draw his bed silently to the open window and lie rapt before the pageantry of the skies, until sleep overtook him with its vivid, tyrannous pageantry of dreams.

All this period had its engaging side. The quickness of his moods, the sudden boyish softness, the shame-faced self-consciousness, the undeceptive, boisterous disguises, the freedom, the naturalness of his awkward, petulant intensity, the sweep of his fancy — all these things had for those who watched him from without with half-understanding, the clear charm that lies in the unspoiled spontaneities of developing life. Even for him, in his duller years, though he knew the dangers to which his utter freedom had exposed him, its spell quickened in him unbidden yearnings that defied his better judgment.

But his judgment weighed more calmly and steadily the reaction that followed. The new unconscious, vigorous logic that filled him with quick rebellious opinions, wandering restlessly abroad for food, fell in some moment of idle reading upon a report that there was no God. It pointed out the miseries of life, and with quick logic shattered his faith in that enveloping goodness that had stood for him vaguely as a bulwark against wrong. His own moments of personal desolation had never put doubts in his mind. Rather they had cast him more intimately upon that sympathy which his faith created for him. But the objective picture of the suffering of others, stirring his own sympathy and his will to help, brought to him nothing but blame for a God who was all powerful but who still

failed to stir a hand in relief. Even this, however, might not have outlasted the fever of his sympathy if the writer had not gone on to smile in scientific terms at the superstition of a heaven beyond the stars. If the deductions were not inevitable from the data cited, yet his inexperience was helpless in the face of his reason; and when he again looked at the stars it was in anguish, and his fancy found no tracery of heaven on the hard blue background of space.

His heart recoiled in terror from his thoughts. Looking at the stars he said to himself that there was no God. There was no God, he said to himself in the long miserere of the Litany. And in saying this he seemed to himself to have become a monster. Yet he had no power to change at will the report of his logic. Every vestige of his passional nature — duty, inclination, fear — was arrayed against his intelligence, but he had no choice; his intelligence was *he*. His desolation was not as for a loss; it was as for a deed of horror unforgivable. He was an outcast hungering at the gates; and always as he took a step to enter he said as in duty bound, "There is no God." And he turned back wearily and in despair. His misery was intense. He prayed incessantly the short desperate prayer for faith.

In the end old habit and the fervent emphasis of his desire battered at his reason and numbed it into submission. Before that time came, however, he wasted himself in hopeless pain, and created in his own life a devastated area that even the passage of time could never color or soften or endear. His

treasonable intellectual ardor had lived, no doubt, because of the intoxication of a newly found power, and had died because, when the burst was over and the point was understood, there was nothing more to do about it. He was instinctively hungering, not for intellectual labor, but for the excitement of exercise, and he was sufficiently of his time to have but little sobering labor to temper the excesses of his excitement. He was naturally all for spontaneity and excess.

He was not done with his acrid atheism. In the wasteful vagrancies of his youth he came back to it again and again. In the meantime he became suddenly subdued and commonplace, as though all the ardors of his spirit had gathered themselves for a flight, and, defeated, had withdrawn, wearied and broken.

Other preoccupations followed to divert his mind to outward things. The family fortunes, never great, and not founded on the ardent, straightforward acquisitiveness that characterized the normal middle-class prosperity about him, slowly declined. Straited circumstances narrowed the range of his growing powers and curiosities so that for a long period an apparent stagnation, and very real external limitations, rendered his case indistinguishably common. In one respect, however, his case was not wholly representative; it did not occur to those in charge of these declining fortunes that he should abandon what seemed to them the normal freedom and leisure of youth and take part in the daily toil that sustained the family.

Cut off from the active pleasures of his growing

associates by successive migrations and successive stages of poverty, he turned from the outer world to the world of books. In his later memories there was a curious duality in the period of his life that followed. On the one hand there was the increasingly dingy world of reality. Cares marred the faces of those who had made idyllic the old life in the house behind the walled garden. There were now dark and narrow rooms in place of the sunlit brown and orange library and the haunts of his old dream people; there was a sordid neighborhood whose unlovely life obtruded itself upon his wonted seclusion; there were narrow unclean streets that must be traversed daily where glaring billboards took the place of lawns. On the other hand there was oblivion from all this searing ugliness in a slowly opening world of romance, whose bright colors and gleaming pageantry, whose unreined freedom and intensity of emotion gave him, now in his period of expanding powers, all that he had to feed upon. It was an opiate whose dreams rapt him away from reality into a world that by emphasis, by love, by every appeal to his gentler tastes, became more real for him than reality itself.

Though no doubt this opiate saved him from many of the influences of the unlovely life into which he had fallen, and guarded him from reactions that might have been, if more healthily active, at the same time more of the kind of that sordid life itself, yet it had the dangers of an opiate — it was an evasion, not a correction, and it fastened itself upon his habits seductively, pointing no way out except through deeper and deeper

draughts of its own poison. He fed uncritically upon whatever came in his way. That was the inevitable penalty and privilege of youth. But though he had enough guidance to keep him free from actual coarseness, he was left to run into the more dangerous shallows of vulgarity. If his taste was ever to improve it must be by way of wading through a soft bog that was more likely to sink him altogether.

In the event he carried some of the stains with him for the rest of his life. At least he never recovered wholly from the delay. When in the course of time his mind had settled into the stability of rational judgment and he could discriminate and guide himself, he was by that very fact beyond the plastic moment when the unconscious impingements of his attention could still weave the native texture of his mind. By that time its warp was already set and its pattern sketched.

As it was, in the bright monotony of the readings of those years he fell upon that last word of excess, *Les Misérables*, more pernicious than the inanities of his earlier indulgence because it was the product of genius. Thereafter his world of romance was lifted into a still higher aloofness from the world about him. In this state he remained for a year or two, reading further but often coming back to its pages more deeply thrilled by its repetition than by the paler though newer reflections of its spirit from other surfaces. It was consecrated by a solemnity that nothing could surpass, neither in heaven nor on earth. What his notion of life was growing to be, under this influence, he could

not have told so well as he could have told a few years before in his brief moments of rational revolt. His mind was lulled to sleep. He had no humor, no iron in his soul.

And yet, underneath, the suppressed elements of his more rational nature were accruing. The occasion of their release was a happy one. Perhaps nothing could have better served to bridge the wide gap between the portentous solemnity of his *Miserables* years and the more balanced years that followed. He had by some chance never been to the play. The isolation of his native town, the principle of simplicity in his early breeding, the enforced simplicity of his later years had all made against it. But rumors of its enchantments had reached him, especially in that long period in which he was living on enchantments, and the opportunity when it came inevitably drew him.

No doubt it was a poor enough affair. It was an open air performance and the weather came off cold. The play was *As You Like It*. He came to it from among his sordid streets in the August twilight, and hung about the still closed entrance impatient of delay yet excited by every noise and occurrence that seemed part of the awaited event. He paced, eager and shivering and alone, before the gate, listening to voices behind the ticket window, watching the muffled figures that rolled up in carriages and disappeared within. He entered at last with a thin trickle of spectators, and sat with them under the trees in a little shivering group before the rustic stage. Beyond that he had no further recollection of them or of their world.

They no longer existed around him. He was translated; he was drunk with a vision of a world that was new and luminous. There was no illusion here as he had known illusion in his romances. Here was reality before him to hate, to pity, and to love. And he hated, he pitied, and he loved it.

On the chair beneath the trees sat his thin body, its legs twisted about the legs of the chair, its hands deep in pockets, and its collar shiveringly turned up. But he did not know it. His heart was in the Forest of Arden. It was a real world of feeling for him, and where yet a magic and nimble wit, striking in him a quick spark of response, clarified the turgid flood of his emotion. There was here something new and something stirring. His young heart thrilled with the sudden perceptions of his mind. Though he seemed not to have lost in sympathy, nor to have lost his own part in the magic events, yet he found himself suddenly aloof, seeing through and through the hearts and minds before him. Clear and bright colors fell upon the moving scene; he was transposed; a new lightness of heart seized him. Rosalind, Touchstone, Jacques — they were beings of another order into which he had but now been born. And when the epilogue was spoken, and the bright figures had disappeared into the dark depths of the forest, he sat still and expectant; for him that world had not gone out. Even when a rough hand touched his shoulder and turned him away, he obeyed mechanically, not seeing that the others were gone and he was alone. He walked home through the dark streets in an airy cloud, and his feet did not touch the hard stones.



Days passed before he again felt the earth, and he welcomed the nights when he could lie on his pillow and live again without interruption in the magic world of his new discovery. Something had taken place in his mind — something that turned him away from the opacity and truculence of Victor Hugo. Light and translucent, the new world stimulated him as the old world had lulled him to sleep. He lost something of his old helplessness in the presence of feeling. His mind was pricked into alertness, and in his new responses he was intoxicated with a new joy. At home in a dark attic, in a heap of lumber, he found, relic of more prosperous days, a pile of illustrated folios of Shakespeare, and into these he plunged with eagerness. There was much that he did not understand, but he read none the less avidly, with now and then a flash of delight that only later he knew to be the thrill of a responsive mind to the stimulus of wit, the leap of a perception, the thrust of an intuition. He found once more, after a dull lapse, the power to stand aloof above his feelings. He could laugh again, catching the irony of his new master. In time, to be sure, the first brightness of his new outlook faded, but it never so wholly dulled as had his early religious revolt. It had more food to sustain itself with. All Shakespeare lay before him, and little by little he plowed forward. Then he found Scott; and Scott lasted him till he was wholly saved.

But though he read his new authors, and exercised with them a clearer, fuller faculty than with the old, he had not essentially changed. They were

still for him an opiate, an escape from his sordid world. He was still a passive reader. If his mind was active it was only when the page was open before him, and only under the stimulus of delight. It was only receptive. He was true to the beginnings of his training, and though his tastes were year by year dedicating him to a preference for what had at one time been called the scholarly life — a life guided by a love of letters — his mental habits were not with equal steps being stiffened by discipline to the rigors of that pursuit — not even being informed that it had rigors to be trained for. He was on his way to add one more to that modern army of vagabonds who wander picturesquely over the broad highway of letters, revealing their soul's adventures with a mountebank's shameless facility, and accorded a happy parasitic living by a public eager to be amused and flattered.

There was in him, however, something that saved him from such a fate in the end, though he never wholly recovered from the long years of passivity. It was high time. He was nearing the end of his early youth. When youth was past he might, it was true, add to his knowledge, but the cast of his mind would be set, and the subtle mode of his thought and the play of his spirit would be forever determined. Shakespeare and Scott had done something real for him, joining to their sentiment a touch of rational perception, and giving him a thirst for further indulgence in his growingly conscious faculty.

They were not wholly gleaned when he fell upon

an old volume of Emerson. It was one of the ironies of his haphazard development that it should have been a volume of the vaguely general essays instead of the *Representative Men*, and it diffused his thoughts skyward into the rarefied upper altitudes, rather than laterally over the tangible surface of history. The one would have held him as well as the other, for it was the play of perception that stimulated him, and his attention might have been brought to more and ever widening human interests. The old volume, however, brought him to something that he had not experienced since the brief candle of his religious revolt had guttered out. It brought him actively to exercise his own intelligence. Like St. Francis in the legend, when he came upon a thought that struck an answering spark in him he would close the book and read no more, but sit and brood upon the soaring flight of the idea. His reflections were vague, no doubt, diffuse stellar fancies, mystic outreachings into the unknowable, but they had the virtue of being active, and they felt the restriction of needing to seem rational and explanatory.

The accident that brought about this activity was fortuitous enough, and wasteful enough. It was the chance of a sudden storm that found him the Emerson in an ancient chest of scraps. It sent him back in senseless repetition of much of the first period of his adolescence when he had thrilled so tremulously at the impingement of beauty in the world around him. But it added something that to his later reflections he knew to be the determinant of his later bent. In seeming to give

an explanation, however vague, of an existence of whose mystery he was growingly conscious, his winged fancies struck in him a new and strong gratification.

His new experiences were extravagant. His unregulated ardor went its own course. Vaguely but ardently he set out in search of explanations. With his battered Emerson in his pocket, and with a lightness of heart and keenness of interest that had known no intermission since his starry night in the Forest of Arden, he wandered abroad into the pied meadows of a world of romantic perceptions. From what ancient springs of kinship with the earth, and what heritage of natural philosophy in the depths of his common nature his sudden lore sprang he could not have told. But his Emerson struck in him immediate responses of acquiescence and understanding as of unguessed memories of ancient revelation. Romanticism, he knew in a later period when he had had the advantages of a completer aloofness and the keener irony of maturity, was but the natural philosophy of adolescence. But at the time, with the joy of adventure, he took it for humane truth. And when he could he left the contradictory coil and trouble of the town, and hunted for it in the acquiescence of the woods beyond.

He felt himself vibrant there with intense and pleasurable sensations — subtle distinctions of greens on the tangled floor, sorrel and wort, the leaf of the violet and the dog-tooth lily; the varied patterns of branches spread against the sky, the dense texture of foliage where the sun struck full

upon distant trees. In restful silences he heard the whispering growth of the grass, the feathery fall of limp leaves, the movement of unseen insects; he caught the faint sweet odor of the decaying sod, and felt the rising coolness of the ground on his outstretched hand. He seemed to himself to be a part of the consciousness in which nature realized her own existence.

Such romantic indulgences were natural enough to his youth, though for him they were a part of the ground he had covered years before. They would have been sufficiently empty, however, if an active mind in him had not, at this second occurrence, set to work upon a troubling observation that recurred again and again to baffle him. A sharp separateness forever stood between his own consciousness and the moving spirit of the outer world. He rebelled. He rebelled perhaps the more passionately that this disturbing sense came upon him most strongly at moments when his identity with that world seemed to him most yearningly to be desired and most nearly consummated — in moments when the sight or sound or scent of touching loveliness moved him to the depths of his soul. In his impotence, at such supreme moments, to push past the veil, he recognized the undertone of sadness that forever haunts the presence of beauty. He failed then, signally enough, to recognize the incommensurable duality between his innermost consciousness on the one hand, and even the deepest reaches of his senses on the other. But he was aware of his own failure to attain that identity to which in moments of emotion he seemed to come

so near. And he tried to build a cosmology that would bridge the gulf.

It was pleasurably consistent as he made it — this cosmology. It brought the wide compass of his observations and his dreams into positions in which they could all be viewed in one set of relationships. And if his experience of life was meager, and he distinguished imperfectly between the consistently logical and the empirically real, he at least was doing with his data what was asked of him in the rules. And his product was in kind, if not in depth, like that of his master. His immortality of development, and his conception of evil as but milestones on the endless journey to perfection, were as logical as the logic of desire ever is.

For the first time in his life, now that he had stepped beyond the companionship of his authors, he felt the need of someone to share his dreams. There seemed a kind of futility in their isolation in his own mind. He was not long in finding others of the same bent, products of the same age and the same youthfulness. Together they strayed afield, and sitting on some bank sang, a little consciously, but earnestly and with justifying heartiness, their prose eclogues of nature and immortality, ridiculous and divine. Or on long winter evenings within doors they soared into an empyrean where after the end of this life's possibilities they were again to take up their thrilling journey.

How long this enthusiasm would have lasted he had some indications from the cooling subsidence of their later meetings. It was not from his sense that the truth of these dreams had faded, but that

in the end the conferences grew thin with the exhaustion of matter. They had reached the end of their tether, and having established a vast cosmos they found little left to do but live their lives in the light of its settled relations. But this life itself was the dull life of poverty, narrowed to an earthly routine, and his mind was active, and hungry for stuff to feed upon. After his seductive taste of ambrosia he was restive under an earthly dietary. He had drunken of a divine nectar and the waters of the kitchen tap were flat in his mouth. He began to suffer under the romantic irony.

He was saved from a despondent reaction, however, by a circumstance to which his unballasted condition had made him peculiarly liable. Before the meetings had become quite graveled for matter they were heard of by an elder of active intelligence, who had wind of their speculative activity and found it sufficiently interesting to attract his sympathy and curiosity. He made occasion to meet them in his library, and with the spell of his own intelligence and in the seductive atmosphere of books and learning which the young vagrant breathed again in grateful remembrance, he released the checks of a new explosion. Whether by virtue of an acutely planned attack, or by virtue of a pregnant state of mind in the youth, it was accomplished with the sureness and precision of time as the clock moved from evening to the small hours of a summer's dawn. The vast, complex flower of a new conception grew visibly in his mind, unfolding between sunset and sunrise.

In all his readings he had come upon little or

nothing to put him in touch with the dominant thought of his own day. Science was a word among other words, with no more quickening life for him than many another; and *evolution* had never stirred in him even an echo of the cry that was ringing in the world about him. Whether it could ever have effected in him the intoxication of that night if he had plodded to it through years of slow development is doubtful. As it was, suddenly but systematically unfolded before him, petal by petal with a thousand deft touches as the hours flashed by him unheeded, it made him drunk. He saw suddenly the vast cosmology of his romantic speculations melt away into the vague azure unknown beyond the skies. And the bright apex of his system, that had shone there so vividly, its rays diverging downward upon all that he knew and all that he could ever know, he saw now to be but an *ignis fatuus* of his own mind. There was a sharp pain in his heart, an hour of poignant, clinging regret; and then the new light flooded in upon him and dazzled him.

He saw now that men themselves stood by the apex of light, and that all the illumination there was in the dark world diverged outward from men's minds till it was extinguished at the vague frontiers of empirical knowledge. He saw, suddenly revealed in the magic of a word, the slow growth, through the ages of the past, of *nebulæ*, of worlds, of organic life, of intelligence, of civilization. In man he saw the growth of all the knowledge there was, groping its way through the humble senses to wider and wider acquaintance with the knowable, till men stood in humility before the vast, acknowledged un-

known. Such were the Spencerian terms of his new revelation.

The vision crashed sensibly through his brain, and dazzled him with a blinding light. He groped his way home, unconscious of his companions, in a luminous halo. Echoes of the evening were bidding him take his place in the devoted army of martyrs who strove up the misty mountains of knowledge, humbly hopeful of a moment's fitful view of higher peaks beyond, and humbly grateful if in the end, weary and broken, they might die clasping to their breasts a feather fallen from the wings of truth. Whether he slept he could not tell. His dreams and his waking thoughts were alike. And though he arose next day and went through the routine of his old habits, the light still dazzled him, glowing brightly in the periphery of his vision.

Slowly the personal significance of his counter-conversion sank in upon his mind. He gave up his Christianity — even the vague pantheism into which it had latterly grown. But he had no regrets. He gave over the æsthetic contemplation of his late cosmology for a militant atheism that for the moment saw no humor in his scoffing ironies, so soon had he forgotten the gentler faith. He visited churches to witness the weak foibles of kneeling believers. He wrangled with his betters, and came off with the easy victory of the scoffer. He abandoned his old reading with a sudden sense that it was archaic, based on an old and naïve conception of men and Providence. And he took up with current writers whose daring pleased his strident revolt. In a word he went through in pathetic miniature the spiritual

history of the half century that was getting on to its last decade.

There was here, without doubt, some gain for him. He had lost his isolation. He no longer climbed into his ivory tower, but stalked up and down the highway with his bat upon his neck, ready for adventure — a knight errant in spirited defiance of the dragon superstition. He seemed to have found the formula of life. The word *evolution* seemed to flash upon him the past foreshortened into a single perspective behind him, and the future into a single perspective before him. It was all very simple.

In time, however, he found it fraught with more difficulties than seemed reasonable to his moments of contemplation. He found in himself a multitude of ignorances that shamed him. His mere enthusiasm was not enough to convert others whose eyes were set on other vistas. He needed more knowledge. And he found in himself, too, as months went on and he came to old roads where his feet had often trod, traitorous sympathies that made him hesitate. Old faiths, old feelings, old enthusiasms, that had lain asleep in his mind awoke at disconcerting moments and pleaded their claims with him. They pleaded the more effectively when he came one day upon a persuasive voice that touched, with perhaps a questionable but no less disconcerting logic, a foible in his latest militancy. This voice echoed the doubt that all beliefs were but the products of the passional nature. And when he examined his own new belief, conscious of his own ignorance, he found that for himself, whatever the

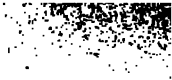
general truth or falsity of the doctrine, the doubt was justified. His last belief, like its predecessor, had been won by his enthusiasm. It was not built upon that empirical knowledge that it postulated as the one thing worthy of respect. Whether he was in any worse case, philosophically speaking, than the great prophets of that movement he did not inquire. For his own part he was no better in relation to his new scientific cosmology than to his older romantic one. He had accepted the one, as he had accepted the other, from a passionate need to orientate himself. He was logical in his bent. But now his logic confuted him.

He awakened to a longing for more knowledge and more guidance. His friend, the mentor of his last conversion, urged him toward science. But when he saw before him the vista of years spent in minute search for the details of physical fact, something within him revolted. He began to see dimly that science itself, for all its prophets, did not solve the problem he was interested in. After all, science was only a body of human knowledge. And though men should in time know infinitely more than they knew now, there would still be the humane problem of how they should use their knowledge. Not in clear terms, but gropingly, he apprehended that the central human problem was the problem of the eligible life, and that at its utmost science was but one contribution to it. He was interested in that central thing in the human universe — humanity itself. Only years later did he see how right he had been in his young intuition that, for all the room science was taking in the world, it was, humanly speaking, but

the servant, precise and reliable, of the moral part of human nature.

Now, however, he mistrusted his perceptions. And his passion for the center not only kept him from being contented with a pursuit of the details of scientific knowledge, but deprived him of the guidance of the best minds around him. He could not know then, as he knew years later, the malady of which he was sick — that something in his native bent and in the accidents of his experience had put him out of tune with his time, had given him a passion for the general in an age of the particular, and for the humane and moral in an age of the physical. And his training had given him neither the data to satisfy his bent nor the habit of concentration, of disciplined patience, of systematic procedure, that should give substantial body to the abstractions of his thought.

And so, without guidance, and vaguely troubled, he sank back into his old desultory reading. Even his reading, after his disappointments and disillusionments, had lost something of its old power with him. He seemed, in his shallow experience, to have plunged into life and to have emerged with a sense of its emptiness. But he was still young, and at the bottom of his heart there clung a hope that refused the doubts of his experience. Somewhere there must be a center, and a knowledge of the center, and a guidance that could lead him on the high path of those longings that so persisted in the mysterious depths of his spirit.



III

PSEUDODOXIA EPIDEMICA

THEY were undergraduates, and their experience was that they did not fit, that they were not taken care of. The significance of their case lay in the fact that they were, as distinguished from others who seemed to fit so well and to be so well cared for, just those for whom that care might have been supposed to be calculated. As for them, to begin with they were willing enough to fit, anxious enough to be taken care of. What else could have been the content of the thrill of one of them, who might have been any one of them so typical was he of the rest, as he first neared the college campus and caught the gleam of roofs above its treetops?

It was late September, and cold, and a northeast wind pushed the drippings of his umbrella against his face. The wide, empty suburban streets were washed clean, and gleamed darkly under the gray sky. Other figures passed him now and again, mere wind-whipped vehicles for umbrellas — rapt, self-centered. He too was rapt, but outwardly, and he stood minute after minute unable, or unwilling, to break the spell that bound him. Gleaming gray sky, gleaming gray streets, the rain drifting heavily southward; before him the drenched green of the campus and the solid red of aspiring roofs — there

they were before him, and there was he — face to face, the seeker and the sought. There was no other content to the spell, no other content in the seeker's mind. While it lasted there was for him no beyond. It was a supreme moment. To move would have been to take a step into the future, to begin a new and uncertain course toward an unconceived goal. To stand still was to prolong the moment of ultimate achievement. No doubt to turn back now would have been to cancel the validity of the moment — so much of futurity lay in the spell that held him — but the value of the moment lay in its perfect culmination of the past. It was the moment itself, not the future consequences of it, that brought fulfillment to the yearnings and hopes that had been his for so long. They were full to the brim in his sense that at last he had come to college.

The time came when the moment could hold no more; and when he finally moved from the spot it was a movement into the future. That he moved forward was a confession of faith, a confession of his anxiety to be taken care of. Above everything else he needed to be taken care of, for he had responded, with an innocence that made his abandon dangerous, to many of the subtle whisperings of the time spirit, and he now stood at the gate of his college far more really adrift than he had seemed even in the whim of his fanciful musings. For his time had fallen at the end of the century, and he was sensitive enough to its spirit to have registered in his own soul many of its sweeping negations. If he had had the momentum of strong family tradition he might have rounded this headland with its cross

currents and shifting gusts, and caught the breeze again within the haven of the college. But he was average American enough to have inherited no cultural traditions that could carry him here. At home on the paternal shelves he had seen from childhood respectable ranks of books, but the Liddell and Scott, and the Xenophon there, more worn of covers than of contents, had as yet come to mean no more to him than long ago had meant the A-ANA, ANA-ATH, ATH-BOI of the Britannica that he had learnt from long gazing before he had mastered his school primer. As for the rest it was significant of the vagueness of the family tradition that Shakespeare and Hugo and Sir Walter were left to span the gap between Xenophon and a battered volume of Emerson.

There was, however, a Xenophon, and perhaps still enough of what had brought it there to have kept him from filling out his notion of "education" wholly at the suggestion of the time spirit. He was, none the less, susceptible enough to have been thrilled with the spell of the word itself without reference to its content. It was an open sesame, the more powerful that its possibilities were so hidden. But if it lacked substance it was rich in a peculiar connotation that had grown out of the life that had fallen to his lot—a life of poverty and family failure that had found its consolation in an escape, more or less perfect, though doubtless tinged with the futility of self-deception, into the limbo of the imagination. Poverty and failure had drawn him into an isolation that had left him no alternative but books; and books, indiscriminately devoured,

had led his escape through bright ways so remote as to deepen the sordidness of that world that had thrust him aside. On the one hand had been toil that brought no rewards, and material anxieties that were none the less real that the stakes were so pitifully small; on the other a spacious region in which was set free in him every yearning of affection, every ardor of will, every energy of imagination, that the real world so effectively thwarted. Latterly too, as the thought of college had grown into the hope of a permanent and material escape, the real world and its toil had sunk to the status of a mere means. What wonder that the real world had grown dim, or that that other world, animated for him at least by every natural exercise of his spirit, had grown more humanly real?

If in this plight he had built up for the word a connotation that had for him no content of definite meaning, he had at least this advantage from his vagueness — that he had not filled it with a meaning definitely false. However much he shared with others of his time the idea that education meant *a way out*, the way out for him had come to be by the gate of the spirit, never as with others by way of that material world that had grown so dim to him. If he had, by the failure of family tradition, no clear sense of the road that would take him into the region of the spirit, he at least had no temptation to follow those clearly marked as leading somewhere else. That he had no clear sense of his own road, however, was not a matter to daunt him now, for his faith was unshaken in the willingness and competence to guide him of those who had that

guidance in trust. Thus much of definite content had come to him in the word "college" — perhaps from the battered Emerson — that its very reason for being was that it stood in the midst of the turmoil of material life to guide its voluntary entrants into the life of the spirit. So he had gone, when the opportunity came, to a college that had as yet few temptations for those whose chosen way out lay through the acquisitive vocations, and he found himself now at last on the very threshold of that new life.

In another respect, however, he was not so free from the spell of the time spirit; and if he had refrained from filling the word "education" with a worldly content by escaping the spell in one of its aspects, he had emptied it of a possible spiritual content by falling under the spell in another. Religion had for him, as for his whole generation, passed into quiescence. It was, perhaps, in his consciousness of the loss rather than in the loss itself that his case was in any way notable. The spell was general enough; to know that you were under it was the rare feat. No doubt his family tradition was operative here, for there had been ministers of the church so continuously in the known history of the family as at one time to have created the surmise that he might inherit the ministry together with the churchly name that had come to him from his maternal grandfather. He was, as a consequence, sensitively aware of the passing of the religious spirit. Others there undoubtedly were to whom religion had always been vague or merely formal, and for whom the vast inheritance of organization, of institution,

and more effectively of vocabulary and childhood association, still sufficed to give them all the religion of which they had ever been aware. To him, however, came the sharp consciousness of the passing of that spirit both from his own outlook upon life and from that of the generality about him. It had come first, this realization, with a struggle in which it was thrust aside and apparently stifled. But the struggle had not been without its fruits in an ultimate and shocking counter-conversion that had carried him, until its force was expended, into the militant ranks of the opposition. That he had before long retired from the fight was due, as he himself came to realize, to that persistent habit of mind which in secular matters so closely allied his hopes and ambitions to things of the spirit. But however time had mollified the militant combativeness of his rationalism, he never again lost his rational point of view.

For him, therefore, whose vague notion of education was at the other extreme from the practical, and whose religion had weakened and died, and whose traditions were so at a loss beyond the pale of vocation and religion, the situation would have seemed dire had he not in his youth and inexperience put so implicit a faith in the identity of the college with that secular inner life that had become so real to him. What wonder, therefore, as he stood on the threshold filled with a faith so far more inspiring than knowledge, that the moment was one of supreme consummation! The uncertainty that had oppressed the hopes of the immediate past and weighted with doubt the only motives that had en-

nobled it, at last had a refutation too dramatic, too tangibly set forth in the event itself, to let it be anything less than supreme. If an enticing sun had made, at this first moment, the view before him the common visual property of other passers, or had lured thither the sophisticated habitués to whom it was as an old story, loved but unheeded, the moment might have been a less perfect dramatization of the event in his own mind. But as it was, the very solitude of his possession — fit climax of the solitude of his hopes — constituted its dramatic fitness. It was of a piece with what had gone before. Henceforth, no doubt, he would share it with others; now, cleared of extraneous detail, green and gray and red, against the ominously gleaming gray of sky and rain-swept streets, it was there for *him*. It was, until the moment overflowed, his alone.

So innocent a faith he had that he would be taken care of, and so ignorant was he of what that care should be, that it was not until he found himself, a year later, at the same spot, that the beginnings of doubt assailed him. What — he came to ask in the shock of that vivified memory — was it all making for, this diversity? For he still clung to his vision of the inner life, and to the hope, not yet dulled, but not yet confirmed, that the college might solidify his fluid sense that there was something there to build up. But he saw now that though he had done well all that had been asked of him, and lent himself eagerly to the unrelated tasks that had come one at a time to his hand, he was still as vague, as to end and means, in his sophomoric sophistication, as he had been in his pathetic freshman ardor.

His sophomore confidence, however, was not proof against the uncertainties of the situation. The prodigious array of "courses" which in printed schedule bulged his pocket served only to heighten the feebleness of the hope that something would emerge to which his separate tasks were contributing. That nothing *had* emerged he was fully aware, but in his sophomore contempt he could have forgiven his freshman futility if he could have felt a trust that the courses he was now to choose would even dimly make for a satisfaction of the longings that still dogged him. He knew that if he had wanted to enter the law, or medicine, or engineering, or any of those professions that seemed to him but the intensification of that real world which he wanted so to rise above, he could have found schools to guide him with advice — advice which he might not have understood but which none the less he would have obeyed with the same faith that had been so insufficiently fed by the college he had chosen. Not that he had even now a clear sense of what perplexed him; he only knew that he might have made his choice from that array in the bulging schedule less blindly if he had had even a dim feeling for some structure to which his choice was to contribute. He felt the gnawing discontent of aimlessness.

His subsequent selections, far from quieting this unrest, only served to heighten it. For he had gone to the kindly dean with longings too inarticulate in his own mind to be worded in the bustling publicity of the "office," and within the crowded minutes his numbered ticket allotted him. In the hour of wait-

ing in line he attained in the presence of those others to a sense of the official impersonality of even his own affairs. The mechanism of this collegiate machine loomed before him so depersonalized as to make an emotional appeal a mere impertinence. In elaborating itself for the personal service of the individual youth whom it hoped to enrich in the end with a personality, it seemed somehow to have attained to an entity to which the youth himself became merely provender. Who was he, in response to the tonsorial "next" that summoned him into the presence, however kindly, of the clerical dean,—who was he, to interrupt the regularity of that businesslike procession with a passionate appeal for a philosophy of life! And if the dean found no fault with the casual choice marked down on the businesslike card before him, how was he to know how casual, how blind, that choice had been? He too was but a servant of that machine, not chosen to impart to each successive entrant in his morning's work a philosophic outlook.

But for our youth, the sense that he had committed himself for months to come, for a precious fraction of the whole time his college was to do so much for him in, to a choice that had been so casual, so blind, heightened the unrest that the retrospect of his first year had already stirred in him. That the separate studies themselves were unable to help him he was by now dimly aware. They fell apart one from another; they refused to cohere. Internally each was self-sufficient enough, carefully labeled, and rounded out by an examination; but the examination might be the valedictory to all the

knowledge and wisdom the course contained. After the valedictory each might be forgotten. The whole that was to be attained was not a structure; it was not even an accumulation; it was only a book-keeper's record of "having had" successively, for a moment each, a sufficient number of parts. Our unhappy youth was as yet, however, unaware of the more general case. That the kindly dean of the college — the college that existed only to guide men to the life of the spirit — had help for others, but had none for those whose generous desire was to enter that life, had not as yet stirred in him the bitter smile which before the end came to be his habitual response to all laudations of the college. He could only feel the baffling pain of not having got what he could not have defined.

If, however, discontent at his displacement cut him off from associations that arise from community of work and enthusiasms, he fell heir to others traditionally more prolific of ardent friendship — those that arise through community of disaffection. In the emptiness of his life he had clung to what had given him his first feeling for the distinction between the haphazard life around him and the more stable life of the spirit. He still read in his old objectless, unguided, desultory way, in the literature of his own tongue, and had insensibly drifted into the elaborate department of his college that concerned itself with that literature. And there it was that he fell in with others whose tempers and hopes and experiences and disappointments were so like his own that their mutual sympathy was spontaneous and lasting. That their association was so lasting was

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due, as they came to realize, to the circumstance that they remained to the end so obstinately undigested a particle in the inwards of their college.

In one sense they were happier than most of their fellows—in the way of friendship—and that atoned for much. They went to fêtes, and laughed with their acquaintances, sang and smoked, and were happy on the surface—even below the surface, in the possession of that friendship that was the most permanent thing that came to them from their collegiate years. There was, no doubt, as much accident in their first meeting as usually goes to the happy or unhappy incidents of life; but they came to feel a kind of beneficent fatality in the circumstance that seemed to rescue them so consciously from the futility of the college itself. There were three or four or five of them, with the dubious advantage of a community of poverty. But they had other genuine advantages; one of them had a talent for friendship, another for trenchant analysis and criticism, another for happy irony, and another for sensitive appreciation. So happy a combination of qualities—and even their poverty might be called happy in isolating them and keeping them from eking out the emptiness of their college life with purchasable gayeties—such a happy combination made their intimate life incomparably rich.

It was a life of daily association, with a routine of habit and custom that kept it from morbidity. There were long Saturdays that took them, week after week, the rounds of the second-hand book-shops, picking up here and there what their meager purses could afford of old writers whom they had

come, in their evenings of reading, to love as much for their present association as for their intrinsic worth. There were dingy cafés, where the waiters came to know their favorite dishes and comment on their occasional absences, and where they spent long mealtimes bandying passages from their day's finds, and munching those unbelievable pastries called Bismarcks. There was the impossibly remote top gallery at the symphony concert, where they found themselves, for the moment, landed on the coast of an alluring Bohemia, urban neighbor of Arcadia. There were, in defiance of to-morrow's lessons, long evenings of reading and Broseley's churchwardens, and midnights of wildest metaphysics when even the dormitory lay in silence; and late strolls on the lake shore where the glare of distant iron mills dimmed the stars and cast a ghostly light on the breakers that roared at their feet.

Through it all ran the stirrings of generous friendship, which had for a time at least the virtue of being enough. Even long afterwards, so whole was the sufficiency of this aspect of their lives in spite of the haunting misery of their more far-seeing moments, that one of them could write, with perhaps no more enlargement than usually goes to the *lauda temporis acti*, truer to the revery no doubt than to the life itself, a reminiscent epistle that might have been inspired by that very ballad of Thackeray's from which they learned of the Latakia that became their favorite weed —

Dear Marsden: In the days of yore
When we, three lusty peers or four,
Or sometimes five,

Flourished on nought, and ate and slept
The better for 't, and grew adept
At sophomoric talk that kept
Our souls alive,

We little thought we'd come to praise
Those fine Elizabethan days
Of poverty.
Now that we've come to man's estate,
With widening parts and stiffening gait,
Would we not brook again that fate
With charity,

If we could have those days again, —
The eager soul, the ready pen,
The easy jest,
The careless strut, the merry eye,
A temper calm, a spirit high,
A ceaseless curiosity
And interest?

Oh, once again to enjoy that riot,
That reckless Rabelaisian diet,
Bismarck and salad!
Those high siestas after tea,
With briar, cob, or Broseley,
And dream-compelling Latakia
Of Thackeray's ballad!

Once more at Ferris's to dine
Where spirits high compensated for wine
And luxury!
Thence to the orchestra in time
To accomplish swift that torrid climb,
And hear old Mozart, his sublime
Sweet symphony!

Do you recall how by your fire
We read — oh, land of heart's desire! —
Old Conrad's "Youth"?
Rare Harlow, Wendhall, Palinson,
Shall we e'er meet in Muir again
To talk, to smoke, to dream, save when
We dream in sooth?

Not one of them but was humbly grateful to the college that it had done thus much for them, that it had made possible so rich and intimate a friendship. But from the rest they stood aloof, and though they were personally happy, yet that constructive passion that had thrown them together left them acutely discontent with the centerlessness of their collegiate life. They loved their college, its green quads, its gray buildings, its dormitories with their fullness and variety of the pageant of youth. If their mutual relations were so rich, however, their common outward relations with the more official aspects of the college were militant with criticism. Their talk was fed by their constant inharmony with the life they were standing apart from. They won for themselves the current epithets for those who hold aloof and criticise. They were, it was said, befoulers of their own nests, indifferent, laughing at all ardor and enthusiasm. They cried out passionately at times that it was those others who were indifferent — those others who took whatever came, with uncritical lightness, to whom one thing was as good as another. But they were overwhelmed with the loud clamor of denial. Yet so far from indifferent were they that it was their very yearning for something to center their ardor upon, to be en-

thusiastic about, that stirred their own unrest, their own criticism of a nest that had proved for them so inhospitable.

What they were after — and though they did not know it in so definite a formula it was a no less ardent search — was wisdom rather than information. “What,” they put it again and again to each other in moments when the life about them seemed overwhelming in its diversity and cross purposes — “what the deuce is it all about?” What they felt, whenever they came to choose anew from all that the college offered them so lavishly was that just the larger whole which could stir the loyalty and devotion within them, was, though the thing they longed for, and the thing for which they had come, just the thing that escaped and was lost between those neatly packed, self-sufficient parcels. To others, perhaps, those parcels were enough, but to them whose wanderings took them about the tumultuous city that seemed so blind, so mad, in its purposeless energy; whose desultory reading inspired them to a speculative inquiry fed by ideas that transcended their immediate experiences; and whose talk bluntly put to all their readings and experiences the most searching questions their errant minds could form — to them those parcels of information lacked the only significance that could have inhered in them — relationship to some larger vision, for a sense of which they so ardently longed.

Once, late in their course, they came upon a phrase which fixed for them thenceforth the malady of their college from which they were made to suffer, and their triumphant repetitions of it on numberless oc-

casions were no doubt exasperating to their less discontented fellows. Pseudodoxia Epidemica! Their college was "not a single discourse of one continuous tenor, of which the latter part rose from the former," as Dr. Johnson, for whom they formed a rebellious love, said of that work of Sir Thomas Browne, "but an enumeration of many unrelated particulars." Pseudodoxia Epidemica indeed! They were not prigs. They had a normal, healthy resistance to the cultural process, but there came a time when they rose to a sense of rebellion at the very freedom which the college gave them, and which their fellows gloried in — a time when they would have welcomed a minute compulsion which would have relieved them of the pain that each new necessity of choice forced them to suffer. Those others had, perhaps, aims which they could conceive before they were fitted to attain them; but for them, their purpose was one that only discipline itself could train them to conceive.

Their last days were bitter. How could they have been otherwise? They had their friendship, but that was now soon to be broken up, and from their college they had got nothing permanent. The facts, the information of their studies, had disappeared, and they had never attained to a point of view, a standard of judgment. And though they had done what the college had required of them, and done it so well that the college had awarded them all the honors in its gift, their own sense of its service was that it had but enabled them to see with disabused senses how empty, how futile it had proved to be, how feebly it maintained the austerities of its great tra-

ditions, and for themselves how vague their sense of a structure to which the play of their spirits might contribute, how empty the future for their spirits with all hope of guidance gone from them.

What wonder that beneath the final gayeties with which they tried to celebrate the one thing which the college had given them — friendship — there lay a passionate bitterness that their college had left their spirits as uncentered as it had found them at the beginning? They *were* passionately bitter, but their bitterness was the smouldering of a faith in their spirits — a faith that still burned in them that there *was* something there to build up.

IV

IN QUEST OF THE CENTER

HIS later fortunes — our youth who had passed so rebelliously through his college years — were ironic and curious. The college had left him without a point of view, without an attitude to life; and so strongly bent was his mind, wrought upon by his family heritage, his early poverty, his years of rebellious faith in the life of the spirit, that a point of view, an attitude to life, was for him, passionately, the one thing for which he cared. His college, however, which he would have said had done nothing for him, had done thus much: it had found him desultorily reading Emerson, Arnold, Coleridge, and Sir Thomas Browne; and had left him desultorily reading Spencer, Haeckel, Ibsen, and Bernard Shaw. But even of them he had disconcerting doubts. His uncentered mind still had before it the search, not for a goal but for a starting point.

He wandered far, and in his quest he touched upon many of the devotions, the theories, the philosophies, by which those of his time were trying to comport themselves as both players and pawns in the game. The vagaries of his course were what his college had left him subject to: he had no ballast, no compass, and no impulsion but a passionate desire to arrive. His mind, uninformed, and un-

formed by a knowledge of the significant thought of the past, did its thinking in crudely generic terms. And in his ignorance and the crude generality of his thought he mounted, with a triumph that was not without its pathos, to the conception of many a world-old commonplace.

It was one of the ironies at which he himself was able to smile, that he never in reality left the college. He could smile, though bitterly, at the sudden light that his appointment threw on the emptiness of his own college years. He was a part of the fountain now, he himself, for all his ignorance. The mirthless humor of the situation increased in him the impatient recklessness that had roughened his manners and made his speech harsh.

His acceptance made him aware that even his own failure in the college had not wholly daunted his faith that what he had not got was none the less there. As he looked out at the world it was still the college that contained the mystery, though he had failed to come upon it. And no doubt it was the sense that there he might still wander in his search that had given him the thrill with which he had welcomed the chance to stay within its walls. He did not at the first moment realize how soon the irony of his own position would envelop him. It was but the greater when it came upon him, that he was to profess the very literature from which the college itself had in a measure weaned him.

Were those others, he presently came to ask, as vague as he as to what ultimate thing he was driving at? Were they perhaps unaware, those grey-beards,

that there was a structure toward which they should be building? Were they unaware of their own vagueness? It came home to him doggedly, however, in spite of the rebellion which made him so arrogantly impatient with the blindness of those who could not penetrate his own shallows, that he was as yet a mere novice elevated no doubt more for his promise than for his attainment. He spent his first year, therefore, in search and inquiry, with more petulance than he could justify in his more urbane moments, but without rancor and with an open mind.

Did those others know, those others who — so specifically did he probe — were beside him and above him in his own work, what the deuce it was all about? From his own older observations he knew that they were divided into factions with curious mutual contempt. One of these factions was concerned with the emotional values of language and literature, and the other with their historical origins. For his own part, by virtue of the impulse that had first brought him to the college, he would instinctively have fallen among the emotional interpreters, had it not been for a circumstance that had arisen from the vagrancies of his early experience. As it was, however, this circumstance held him aloof from both. The prompt result was that he came to believe that the thing he had so long hunted for without success he must find elsewhere than in the pursuit of his own business — perhaps even elsewhere than in the college. The effect on his own work was that it became a curious hybrid intrinsically no nearer his sense of right than either of the factions he was holding aloof from. But for him it had the

virtue of not having crystallized into what he felt to be definitely wrong. He suffered, however, a renewal of the misery that had so long dogged his thinking moments. He had attained to no sense of life; he was still adrift.

The circumstance that held him so aloof from the tendency of the factions was the remembrance of his own early poverty, and his quickened sympathy for the sordid chaos of the city in which his days were fallen — remote considerations enough in their apparent detachment from his problem, but for him marking inevitably the way of his approach. As the year crept by that followed the beginning of his duties his reflection threw him more and more into doubt, and at last into utter negation of the value of the routine of his teaching. What was its point in its isolation from the general life? Echoes of such a cry came to him in his reveries, in his wanderings about the city, in the reading he had fallen into. He understood the general life with all the vividness born of harsh experience, and slowly but without bitterness he generalized it into an injustice that constituted the great human problem. What indeed was life for if not for those who lived it? And what were its institutions for if not to make it more perfect for them? But the college — ! His impatience grew.

In retrospect the tenuous thread of accidents that had rescued him from a lifetime of sordid struggle for bread seemed to have been saved from breaking so fortuitously that he could not think of it without a shudder. It had miraculously not broken; and he had gone to college. Was he now, however, he who

knew so keenly what poverty meant, to isolate himself from all connection with the common lot? Was the college after all merely an escape? Did it not gain its significance from its service to humanity? It was just that significance that he was unable to see in the reality before him. He knew that poverty was too common an accident to be ignored, yet here was he, luckily rescued from it, in the attitude of indifference. The snug remoteness of his daily routine revolted him. He cast himself passionately among the humanitarians.

So unused was he to the drive of a positive enthusiasm that in its first moments he gave an unchecked rein to his humanitarian impulse. He saw with new eyes the chaotic city about him, its squalor, its depravity, its waste of humanity. He saw, more bitterly than all, young children growing up in surroundings such as to condemn them, before they could raise a voice in protest, to a lifetime no better than the life they were born to. In the intensity of his feelings he saw the subjective equality of men in the right to happiness. And the spectacle he saw before him was one of appalling inequality. The eternal mystery of consciousness, the haphazard distribution of identity, the inequality of natural gifts, he could muse upon without destroying his sense that for much of the variety of fortune to which conscious identities were born humanity itself was responsible.

With that acceptance of responsibility, aptly enough, there had come to him, as to many, the sense of power to meet it. At a critical moment his mind had been seized and formed by the evolution-

ary conception. It would not have been possible now, if it had been desirable, to cast his thoughts in any other mould. Perhaps because, with the scientific movement, the humanities had dropped into a minor place, it was easier for the people of his time to think of human life in terms of biology than it would have been for an earlier generation. The scientific world had gone with Darwin and Huxley and Spencer. With it as with them the biological analogy had become the biological identity. And in biology the whole of the past had come to be summed up in a word: *Evolution*. The conception was intoxicating. At last men seemed to have grasped life as a whole. The sense of its slow and painful duration and development, slowly and painfully acquired by the old humanists from the records of human thought and experience, was here foreshortened by the flash of a definition that revealed the process of life from its beginning, and cast light ahead into the future. Boxed into the brief compass of a word life seemed somehow easily dirigible.

Round about lay the whole body of scientific knowledge to be mastered and enlarged and applied to human life; and before stretched the new route of humanity whose destiny now lay in its own self-conscious power. Life could be rationalized. Instead of the haphazardry of chance which had made such fearful waste and suffering as he saw about him, there could be ordered a social process in which every individual should be brought to the highest possible development. Here was a service, it seemed to him in the sweep of his new outlook, to which he might devote himself without the hesitations that

had dogged his professional life. He spent a period bitterly regretting that in his first vision of science there had not been revealed to him the connection between science and the human problems with which he was so persistently concerned. The emptiness of his college years might then have been filled with just that significance for which he had so passionately longed.

In the midst of such musings he stood, one dusk, at a down-town street corner half filled with shame that he still held aloof from the real work of life. Stores and counting houses and factories were closing, and clerks and operatives tired from the routine of the day thronged the streets. Wistful girls' faces, still young, still pretty, but with the mark of the curse already upon them, peered at him as he stood, himself wistful and sympathetic, at the side of the human stream. Once or twice he caught in an understanding face an answering sympathy, and he glowed with a rush of feeling that confirmed mysteriously his sense that his academic aloofness was essentially wrong. The warm pulse of humanity throbbed at his heart. Once there passed him an evil fellow, cursing his drunken wife. There was no redeeming virtue in the man's own face; he too was sodden with drink. But our youth was more touched with the incident as it was than if the man had been better himself. Here was no mere personal tragedy of virtue victimized by vice. That would have been of the native warp of life. Here was something larger in which responsible society itself was the oppressor, crushing out the possibility of virtue from both victims. He shuddered at the

picture. And back in his mind there came a mocking voice repeating what he had said that morning to the generous youths whose minds he was helping to train: "The beauties of the *Faerie Queene* lie in that very detachment from reality that has freed the poet's fancy from all sordid restraints." How paltry it sounded, cold, aloof, remote from the actual life of suffering man, and to be indulged only by ignoring the substratum of human misery! Was the college, after all, only a private device of the elect to enable them to escape from the intrusive responsibility of life? And was he, having escaped, to devote himself to freeing others from this responsibility?

He returned at night within the college walls with a sense of emptiness and discontent more poignant than he had ever known. The expensive elegance of the college architecture, far removed from the sordid squalor he had but now caught a glimpse of, revolted him. His comfortable supper revolted him. The *Faerie Queene* on his study table revolted him. And the thought that he would in another day be back at the task of leading youths out of a vital concern for life — he who knew so well the colossal injustice of civilization—taunted him insupportably. He had lost his humor, but he laughed outright, mockingly, at the spectacle he made for himself. In the madness of the moment he dramatized for the morrow an impassioned revolt before his startled class, a wild fling at the smug process he was assisting at and they were submitting to. He felt fiercely that he could endure it no longer.

And in the white glow of his passion there came to him a revelation. Never before had he been so

intimately, so wholly himself, so free from the obstructive trammels of criticism and doubt. Never had he felt so at one with himself, internal assent going out to meet impulse. Criticism and doubt! He saw that what he had been wasting his years looking for in the college was an intellectual unity in his conception of life. What wonder he had found nothing! It was suddenly borne in on him that life was a matter of living, and that its unity lay not in an intellectual grasp but in an impulse vitalized by emotion. He attained in a moment to a sense of how essentially and obtrusively an outsider was that intellect that had taken its seat in men's minds to the disturbance of their internal unity. He had found himself at last!

His next step, as he came to realize, was but a confirmation of one of the findings of his passion: the reason *was* an intruder. But the confirmation came from so different a source and with so different a coloring that he had shifted his loyalty to his intelligence before he recognized the path he was following.

In his present loyalty to his passions, however, the immediate restlessness of inaction was intolerable, and he left his room in search of quiet for his spirit. It was perhaps an echo of that rationalism that was inherent in him that sent him now to an *advocatus diaboli* in the form of an obscure Grecian whose aloofness was complete, yet whose very aloofness had a quiet authority that appealed to him. Tonight, however, when weary of mind and body he had sunk into the great chair hospitably drawn up before

the fireplace, and had taken a mellow cigar from his host's inlaid humidor, the very seductiveness of the moment in those pleasant surroundings cried out to his conscience. The Persian rugs under his feet, the great racks of books against the walls, the few rare pictures, the rich curtains, even now seemed to dull the vividness of that other spectacle that had so crystallized the impulses of his generous sympathy.

He could, he knew, have broached the burning question within him, and won a sympathetic analysis of his case from his quiet friend; but he had no need: the rich seclusion of this burial among the records of the past, of this content with life at second hand, was eloquent of the findings that would come of such an analysis. His host had confronted too, no doubt, the problem of life; and the shelter of the cloister was his solution.

The evening was not, however, without its implicit broaching of the issue. They looked together at curious old books with quaint pictures, at rare first editions, and talked lightly of the strange, fitful aberrations of the human spirit — of the sophists, of the schoolmen mediæval and modern, of the Blakes, the Newmans, the Tolstoys in their vain eternal quest for the quiet of the soul. But the older man, with delicacy, had no unasked dogmatism for his guest; and the younger man was too uncertain of his own purposes to risk subsequent affront to advice which he knew he might evoke. They spoke of Plato. His host, with a smile, drew from beneath the light on his table the blotted draft of matter yet fresh from his pen and incomplete.

"A moment's mood," he said, smiling gravely, "but here in the midst of the turmoil of a life that has got beyond our control by its very numbers, and by giving over the reins to numbers, I sometimes revolt. I am no poet, alas! but the spectacle of life is sometimes too poignant for utter silence. These lines are serious, but only half serious."

The younger man read the passage without comment.

Colors flashing upon the retina; motion, change, variety stimulating the eager vision; sounds falling gratefully upon the ear, of poplar leaves on still midnights, of flames upon the burning hearth, of winter winds in the chimney, of low unhurried voices; love, or hate, or ambition, or anger, or sympathy—above all, sympathy—concentrating the soul upon outward things; fair faces, fair forms, stately music, humane justice, bringing the hush of wonder upon the spirit; the rush of life, its traffickings, its moth-like beating about the marsh-lights of pleasure, the heaps of broken wings and bodies seen at dawn the sport of the forgetful winds; the ardent sense that deep-seated in the soul is a vision of simple order which, could it but find a voice, might breathe a meaning into the chaotic elements—such are the moments when reality impinges with intensity.

Then, sudden, a veil falls upon the spirit, and reality, the vision of life, becomes but a vision indeed, becomes but the shadow of a dream, so unmotivated the exits and the entrances, so purposeless the sufferings, so empty the foolishness and the wisdom, so meaningless even the happiness that alone could make the evanescent consciousness of being worth the insistent pain of life. If then life be but a dream—for that dreams come and go and bring strange recombinations in kaleidoscopic

*succession, the impatient soul might, not unworthily,
wish to choose for its own phantom passage its own
phantom moment, Then —*

O Chronos, dream again, if it be sooth
That life be but the shadow of your dream,
And we its shadow puppets. Dream again.
Dream me a Greek upon the agora,
There to hold converse with wise Socrates,
When life was young, and wisdom in its youth
Unfettered by the phantom facts of time,
Held to the heart and soul of living men.
Then might I walk with Plato — still unguessed
The anguish of all time once he was gone.
And it were well to feel the human warmth
Of austere virtue bodied in a god —
A thing of beauty and a presence near —

It was a fantastic, futile, whimsical conception, but the young man read it in his present state of mind with an intensity that he tried to conceal even from the author himself. Out of all proportion to what it said it awoke echoes of old, long-silent voices within him. And when he rose to go it was with a strange complex of emotions that kept him from a word of comment or applause.

He said good-night, and launched himself into the empty streets to walk until he should again have composed his newly aroused spirit.

Most curiously his passion of the afternoon had died. The passion of the growth of months had quietly ebbed — it smote him in his shame — under the soft influence of an hour in the midst of luxury, and talk of the enhaloed past. That his passion should have died so easily, however, was but an

additional impulse to his conscience. He would follow the day's impulse though the passion had gone out of it. His conscience dominated him.

Under the cool stars he looked curiously upon this sharp duality that had suddenly disintegrated itself inside him — no less that they both for the moment pointed in the same direction. They were of different orders, deriving from different seats of authority. Their commands echoed from different quarters. He questioned searchingly the paradox that, between the two, his allegiance went with the one that seemed the less native, the one that he seemed even to love the less and whose right he could not explain — his conscience.

Seeing his allegiance secure but without the endearing impulse of feeling, he tried to rally his emotions to his support to make his final obedience less perfunctory. He recalled tauntingly his host's phrase, "here in the midst of the turmoil of life," to describe the seclusion of that aloof library where it was known that he spent all his leisure hours, and of which a single hour had sufficed to thrust off into unmeasured distance that turmoil of life and its poignant injustices against which but a moment before our youth had risen in passionate rebellion. He recalled his host's slighting reference to numbers. He recalled the dream fantasy with its nostalgic straining toward the past. But his passion still lay dormant, if not dead.

He knew, however, that on the morrow he would take some step in that service to humanity which he had deferred so long. He pictured to himself the humble tasks of relieving poverty, comforting

despair, instructing elementary ignorance. There at least, however vague his present sense of practical means, he should know what he was driving at. And though it would be work done in obscurity, and go perceptibly no farther than the few wretches whom he could reach, it would at least for his own peace of mind be something that he could see the significance of. If he should go to it without passionate enthusiasm it would at least satisfy his reason and his conscience. In the freedom of his mood he followed an impulse and went again, alone now, on one of those midnight rambles that had added their touch of endearing lawlessness to his undergraduate friendship. And when he came, by way of the old route, to the lake he sat down on a deserted bench and let his mind take its undirected flight. That it went off into corollaries of his day's experience was in keeping with his natural bent. He had an instinctive abhorrence of isolated data; he was more concerned for the relations of the fact than for the fact itself. The particular facet of his day's experience that his present corollaries sprang from was his discovery of the duality of his internal government. It intrigued him; and it intrigued him the more because though he had known of it and could have phrased it any time these many years, yet only now had it become a practical reality for him. He had found it, so to speak, in its own natural lair, working in its working garb in its own workshop. The cold psychology of it phrased in analytical terms had never come home to him.

It was incidentally to this last perception that his eyes were suddenly open to the significance of the

scholastic work he had taken up. For he caught a fleeting glimpse of the peculiar fact of literature — that unlike the sciences that dealt analytically and mechanically with the human aspects of life, literature dealt with them where they were to be found, and with all their clothing of emotional force. What for him had always been so merely pleasurable came upon him keenly as something else, something very close to a revelation of truth as it existed for human use.

The perception was as yet general, but he saw in it a field for a wide and revealing development. And it struck him as a touch of irony that the significance he had struggled so long and so blindly for he should see for the first time just now when he was on the point of abandoning it for something else. But he wrenched himself from these regrets and went on arily into the pleasant speculations that he had caught a glimpse of.

A pair of verses from his host's fantastic poem repeated themselves in his mind, and associated themselves significantly with the dual government he had but now been so keen about.

And it were well to feel the human warmth
Of austere virtue bodied in a god.

His thoughts took easy wing; matters that before had lain isolated and inert fell into clarifying relations. He realized now that the sense of external authority, as distinguished from the internal passions, was, for all the anthropologists, the real basis of religion; and he felt for the first time — he who at one time had expected to enter the church — a

spontaneous religious impulse. The inspiration of the Hebrew prophets, always before to him a curious phenomenon of a strange, isolated people, became one with the inspiration of all those who had attained in spirit to the seat of that external authority that looked down serenely but inexorably upon human affairs. The familiar demon of Socrates, at which he had smiled indulgently, became a reality — the externalization by a poetic nature of that same authority. Confirmations fell in from odd nooks of his memory. A passage that long ago had impressed him from a translation of the *Antigone* sprang into new vitality — the maiden's tragic obedience to

The unchangeable, the unwritten code of Heaven,
Which is not of to-day and yesterday,
But lives forever, having origin
Whence no man knows. . . .

The long back-swell from an offshore breeze heaved and broke endlessly at his feet, and in the darkness under the vast skies, against the great background of silence there seemed something inexorable in the somber rush and recession of the waters. There, indeed, was a part of nature, of which he too was a part, and from which he had what he had of life. But he saw something dimly that was not working in the heave and flow of the swells, something that arrayed itself, in a measure, against the mechanic fatal forces that he shared with the winds and the waves. Whether it too might be a part of that nature he did not then stop to inquire, but he saw that it was a thing distinctively

human, and that it intruded upon the situation with a scheme of its own.

Rapidly as he sat there in the darkness, and with perhaps a too facile generalization, he cast his senses and his passions on the side of nature; they were things that came with the coming of life and flourished without cultivation in the naïve freedom of neglect. And the intruder was the intelligence, with its own conception of a way of life that was good, which came with its schemes for directing the senses and the passions, guiding the one to special aptitudes, and the other to special restraints and directions.

He had his love for the senses. He had his love for the starry night about him, and for the remembrance of sights and odors and sounds that bound him in affection to certain places — the odors of certain lanes, the noises of the house heard through closed doors in obbligo to the gliding pictures of well loved tales, the checkered countrysides of his boyhood home. And in his friends he loved the fresh spontaneities of smile and gesture, the play of spirit, the touches of *life*. Indeed those were the very things he loved. But he loved them when they were directed and proportioned to the intruder's scheme. For he had seen sensuality and gluttony and malice and envy and anger and cowardice — spontaneities as natural and lively as the beat of the waves at his feet — and he had hated them. He knew that though it was life he valued, it was life tempered and proportioned.

In the rapid outline of his case he paused for a moment over the conscience. It was not intelli-

gence, he saw at once. It belonged to the affections. Reluctantly he conceded it to the side of nature. But he saw, too, that if it belonged there it was, none the less, the tie between nature and the intruder — the sanction for the intruder's authority. It was a spontaneous loyalty to the intrusive schemes for the *good*.

He rose slowly and began his slow march homeward. There was a peace in his mind that he had not known since the first innocent year of his college life. He was still, indeed, far from out of the bog he had been struggling to get free from. But he had at last a sense of the direction to follow.

Characteristically he saw the danger that in his intellectual excitement he might dull his own sense of responsibility to the external authority that had taken residence in his conscience; and when the afternoon of the following day found him free he betook himself resolutely to one of those modern "settlements" where so nobly men and women of refinement and intelligence had thrown themselves on the general stream of humanity with the hope of rendering a service perceptible and direct to those who were most deeply submerged. He went with a head cooler and a heart lighter than he had had for many a day. He had, it was true, a sense of loss — loss of the enthusiasm which yesterday had promised to make him a passionate devotee, and for which his gain of a rational self-direction was not a direct substitute. He had not lost, however, what had lain at the bottom of his original impulse — the sense that life was plastic in the in-

creasingly self-conscious hands of humanity itself; that devoted service in the moulding of the future might be directly related to that end he had so futilely groped for in the long blind wanderings through his college years.

It was a shock to him, when he came to it, to find that he had overlooked the matter of his own dependence — that he had nothing to offer but his untrained services, and that he must live by his own work elsewhere. He clung therefore to his college, and offered to the settlement his leisure hours. He plunged with devotion into simple duties among the ignorant and oppressed, and with them at times his sympathies brought him almost to the height of his early passion. The great injustices of life came home to him in the concrete. Victims of greed, of bad laws, of good laws unenforced; children broken body and soul by work, by evil environment; girls dragged in the mire by men's evil passions; old age crushed by relentless want, outcast and neglected, dying in corners; worse than all, depravity that had been born and bred to depravity; and more touching than all, the silent heroism of the poor.

If in his present state he had been less rational the force of his feelings might have carried him wholly into the work of the settlement, for opportunity soon came by which he might have dropped his connection with the college and earned his living in the very service itself. He could smile, a little ruefully perhaps but still smile, to see that his hanging back helped to confirm the ill repute that the reason acquires in some very worthy minds. But in his old college days he had grown inured to the

easy blame of those who had little experience of the inner drive of an idea. And now there had revived in him in the midst of his labors, in spite of his own uneasy sense of disloyalty, in spite of his knowledge that reason often became the tool of sloth and desire, the sharp restraint of a rational doubt. And he hesitated. He had viewed humanity from below, stirred by a sense of mastery in the vast sweep of the term *evolution*, by the sense of life's plasticity, and by the sense of human responsibility and power; and he had tried to enrich the lives of some of those who had been trampled to the bottom. No doubt here and there he had helped. But he saw with discouragement how feeble was the remedy at best, and how wild the trampling. He had no criticism for those who so nobly did the work of relief; but he saw clearly that they were not fighting the battle — that they were but caring for the wounded. For him, he wanted to enter the fight itself.

His old constructive passion was again clamorous, and though he knew how empty his own college years had been, and though he saw in neither his own teaching nor that of his colleagues about him anything that should make the college better for those that followed him, there came to him a perception that made him cling to the college in spite of his doubts. In his harsh contact with the concrete injustices of life, there came the sharp reinforcement of the distinction he had attained to in his own mind. As he looked about him he saw, in print of life, wisdom giving to humanity the clue to all it had of the *good*, and the unrestrained passions

all it had that horrified him. He could only conclude that the task of construction lay in the development of that wisdom, and in the restraint and guidance of those passions.

In the meantime he had passed through a period when he had gone heart and soul with the socialists. They at least were fighting the battle itself. They recognized the human responsibility for human evolution, and seemed to promise in their seizing and molding of the social process the rationalization of what until now had been so cruel in its anarchy. He studied anew his Marx, his Wells, the latter with its stirrings of a kindly sympathy so like his own that his criticism was lulled to slumber. But in time it awoke, and he saw in the schemes of socialism obstacles that checked him sharply in his conversion. In the harsh questions that he put to himself over the miseries that fell now so unceasingly to his notice, there came to him doubts even of democracy itself.

He had not accepted the humanitarian dogma of responsibility without the rational privilege of applying it to whatever came within the humanitarian net; and now he saw that if humanity were responsible for the better conduct of the future it was also responsible for the evil of the present. It was of the essence of democracy that it opened up for application to the problems of social life all existing human wisdom. In the vividness of his horror at the spectacle about him he could only conclude that that wisdom was, in so far, at least, inadequate — that it had not found human life so plastic or itself

so skillful as to make the spectacle perceptibly less terrible to compassionate eyes. For the zeal of his fathers who had established democracy he had the defense that they were at least shifting the government from the tried to the untried — from the tried few under whom the evil of life had seemed unbearable, to the untried many who at least had suffered and been disciplined in the lessons of that evil. For him now, however, there was still the spectacle of that evil — which democracy had not cured — driving him to seek a new, a wiser, a more compassionate moulder of humanity than those who had been tried and found wanting. And when he looked about him for a new and untried wisdom, he found in socialism, at least, no shift. If the people had been found wanting in the democracy, it was still they who were, in the new scheme, to mould a plastic humanity — the same wisdom which had put evil men into power, passed evil laws, failed to enforce good ones, and failed to right the very wrongs and injustices that alone were driving him to seek a remedy.

The moral struggle, the slow, self-denying labor that went to the building up of character was too personal, was in the very nature of the case too individual to be much helped by governmental devices. And when he heard the old plea that the cure for democracy was more democracy he could smile sadly at the pathos of the hope. For what was there in any government to increase the virtue and develop the characters of its people. And the present one was perfect enough in theory to be as good as the people who made it up. It was not that

he had lost sympathy for the poor victims of injustice and degradation, but that he could see no wisdom and virtue in a system apart from the wisdom and virtue in the people who administered it, and he saw in democracy already the expressed quality of just those people who would make up the new régime. He saw no reason to suppose that their quality would be better under a vastly more complex and more difficult system. It was not, either, that he despised democracy. He was bred to it, and it had his loyalty. But he could not believe that socialism would be better. Indeed his loyalty to democracy was loyalty to its freedom, and in socialism there seemed to lurk a despotism that destroyed even that. For freedom was moral opportunity.

From this point he could sum up his case. If wisdom were to mold humanity it was, he knew, no one's wisdom but theirs. Theirs he had looked at, and the spectacle of its products had driven him afield for a time in search of more and other wisdom. But at last he had come back; all the available wisdom to guide humanity lay in the minds of men, and all men had been tried — the one, the few, the many — and each in turn had been found in some measure wanting. Now there was nowhere to turn. The pursuit had come to the last ditch. There was, however, this to be said — that if human evolution did depend upon human wisdom there was still something to be done. He had groped to this point when the time came for him to choose between service in the settlement and his place in the college. And he chose the college.

It was not without misgivings that he gave up the humanitarian work he had begun so earnestly. It was hard to convince his aggrieved friends that he had not proved disloyal to the promises of his old enthusiasm. But for himself he knew that his loyalty was unmarred. He was a humanitarian still, but he had shifted the field of his labor. With his new conception the college became a place transfigured. There, he saw, was his work. He went to it with a singing heart.

He signalized his spiritual return to the college by another visit to the *advocatus diaboli*; and as from the earlier one he came away charmed but in rebellion at his host's cloistered seclusion and preoccupation with the past. He broached on this occasion his own conclusions and his own eagerness to get at the heart of his problem. The reply he evoked was but a qualified approval.

"You are right, but you are too eager," said his host. "You hope for immediate returns — for perceptible results upon the evils and injustices that none of us can shut our eyes to. But unless you find deeper ground for your satisfaction than the perceptible results of teaching itself, you will lose heart. For your efforts will never show. There are results, ultimate and imperceptible; we must believe that or give up. But the hope of quick returns is the curse of modern life — in business, in education, in the humanitarian movement itself."

Our youth still clung to the humanitarian hopes that had committed him so recently to the college. But the poison, evil or good, of his friend's criticism clogged the flow of his spirits and drove him back

into troubled cogitations that seemed for a time to threaten the basis of all his hopes. In time the dull pain at the fading of his illusions left him in listless misery. But he checked his discouragement with some vigor; and though he had grown sick of his own thoughts, and sick of the large terms in which alone he could cast them, he forced himself back to his problem.

His rebellion was that what his friend had told him came home to him as true. But he had so set his heart on perceptible results that to go to work in bare faith, in a field where faith itself was dying, was intolerably bitter. There were times when, impatient of the slow, uncertain effect of the literature he was trying to create a concern for in those younger men who had so little native concern for it, he was tempted to stifle his doubts and in the face of his aloof friend's warning and his own better sense, go over to that other thing within the college that seemed to get so much more directly at the immediate affairs of men. He was tempted to go over into sociology.

In the reflections which, now that he was used to the drive of an emotion, he let loose hard on the heels of an impulse, it was only the distrust of his own stability that kept him back. So baffled was he, so empty, that in despair he was driven into the wilderness for fasting and prayer.

When he emerged there was a spark of light in his soul, and though it did not at once illumine all the twistings of his maze, it burned steadily and gave him hope.

From the detachment to which he had attained

he realized how arrogant had been the passion of that haste with which he had tried to seize upon life. He saw the shallow impatience of even that slower process with which he had come back to the college. He saw simply and with shame that what in crude generalization he called wisdom was to be got only from men who had it. The phrase was simple, but its simplicity was not significant of the revolution that it created in his humbled mind. He perceived sharply a new distinction between the intimate passions and senses on the one hand, and on the other that wisdom which it was so important to create and spread among a responsible humanity. For whereas the former were inherent and born anew in the body of every man, as he had seen on that night on the lake shore, the latter, wisdom, was not inherent, and would die outright if left to nature. He saw now still more clearly the distinction for which he had groped so blindly in his fruitless college days — that the spiritual structure was that slow accumulation of wisdom which men had so painfully been building through the ages — an intangible structure which nature ignored, which lived outside of nature, and which would vanish save for its voluntary, painful re-creation by those who mastered it anew. It dwelt nowhere but in men's minds, and dwelt there only by perpetual conscious remastery.

This, then, was the spiritual structure; this marked the eternal distinction between nature and human nature; this was the human product which men must perpetually renew and augment if human life was to be ennobled in its own peculiar kind.

He bowed humbly before the idea, with a shamed knowledge that he was but arriving at a sense of life attained long since by many men in all ages. But he took comfort in the thought that this attainment itself was a part of that eternal re-creation that must forever go on if the spiritual structure were to endure. His mind swept over the literature and history that he had used to read so desultorily, so keenly, with so little sense of its significance, but with so right an instinct for its worth. That was the human accomplishment — the humanities. The word put on a meaning not objectively different from what he had always put into it, but subjectively enriched and vitalized out of all resemblance.

He looked back from this fresh point of view with a quickened understanding of his humanitarian past. The word still had for him a connotation so appealing to every gentler fiber of his nature that he had need even now of his hard-earned submission to the final authority of his reason. It was not easy, this struggle against his own generosity and against the silent reproaches of friends he had but now so devotedly seconded. But he had tried the humanitarians, and he had found them tainted with impatience, by a shallow haste to apply remedies to the symptoms of the disease they had set out to cure. And the evil itself — he had vague glimmerings of a vision in which, properly speaking, it was not really an evil — a vision in which he saw the slow march of the human spirit upon the chaos of pure animalism; whatever encroachments humanity had made upon the stark horror of brute

life was so much gained — gained by the slow accumulation of a knowledge of life, the slow building up of the spiritual structure. What he, and they the humanitarians, had so much shuddered at was the still unconquered field of the natural man — the natural as sharply distinguished from the humane, a remnant rather than an outgrowth. He saw that if they and he found it an evil, they found it so by virtue of a point of view made possible by that attainment of the human spirit to which they were latterly become so inimical.

For those who worked in the direct relief of suffering he still retained the warmest sympathy, knowing that what they did was a good in itself. But he was bitter — and he smiled now to realize it — against what he knew so well from his own recollection of himself — the humanitarian antagonism to those who devoted themselves to the mastery and perpetuation of what men had already gained. How antagonistic they were he was not left without present reasons for knowing, for he was filled with reproaches from many sources. But it was not these that made him bitter; it was the perception that it had been the humanitarian diversion that had made it possible for him to pass his undergraduate years so wholly blind as to what the college and he were there for. In the restful security of his present point of view he could be amazed by those honors by which the college had proclaimed that he had got the best it had to offer. Obviously it had ceased to think of itself as the agent of that perpetual re-creation in the minds of men of the wisdom by which life was to be made humane.

He was free now of the obstructive trees, and could look back on his path and see the forest he had been wandering in. He had come out not far from where he had entered. He had spent a wasteful time in it. But he was not without something in his bag. He had got an understanding of the environing movement of his time; and he had found his way out. The endearing quest for happiness, striking across-lots direct for its elusive object through the old pathetic deceptions of the senses and the passions, and through the simple elementary passion for material possession, had lost its way. They had forgot, these eager questers, that only the slow development of wisdom could produce the happiness they longed for. And even those generous few who were sacrificing themselves to care for the poor had forgot that in trying to bend every instrument to the direct relief of poverty and to the immediate wants of the multitude they were destroying the means of whatever ultimate amelioration of the human lot there could be.

The age of unprecedented concern for the poor was an age of unprecedented wealth. Clearly something was wrong. When he looked to the ultimate vision of the humanitarians he saw that the modifications which they were making in social life, in government, and in education all looked toward a bodily, not a spiritual end — toward ease, and physical comfort, and a more general leisure. Leisure! He knew that in the word *leisure* was implied a hope for all those things of the spirit for which he himself cared. But he saw how futile that hope was bound to turn out in the event. He himself had been

poor. He had emerged from poverty by dint of a care for the things of the spirit. He had found leisure for the pursuit of those things. But though he had longed for them passionately, and had gone to those seats where by old tradition they were supposed to be found, he could not find them. Even so soon had they been driven into obscure corners and discredited in the general repute by the humanitarians in their impatience for the nearer ends. And he saw in himself a symbol of that future time for which they hoped, when all should have leisure, but when, alas, the traditions of that life of the spirit should have fled even from the obscure corners in which at last he had so fortuitously found it.

The humanitarians had dominated the age. And if they had not kept it from being an age of luxury and an age of oppression — how could they with their own ideal so much akin to the ideal of the rich? — they had managed to discredit the disinterested pursuit of humane wisdom. For our youth, however, who had struggled so long to orientate the chaos of his own vision of life, and whose horror was of the devotion of his spirit to an end which he could not square with the order of that vision, and who had learned to live without approval, content with despised causes, there was exhilaration in the sense that at last he had found what from the first he had so ardently longed for. He saw how right had been the instincts and vague desires with which he had years ago sought out the college, how right had been the rebellion of that little group of friends who had so stubbornly resisted to the end the temptation to fall into an easy and popular acquiescence.

He knew with bitterness that they had not wholly escaped its spell — that if it had won their open rebellion in failing to guide them whither they so longed to go, it had none the less by its constant pressure and by their exposure to every wind of chance influence bent them at last, unconsciously, to its own attitude. He saw how his best years had slipped by leaving his mind ignorant, unformed by that knowledge that he saw now to be the basis of human wisdom. He abhorred the vague terms in which he was condemned to do his thinking. But his bitterness was blunted by his exultation that however empty, however ignorant he had emerged, he was at last aware of that spiritual structure to which his own spirit had felt so vaguely akin, and in which he had so long put his rebellious faith.

He carried his conception humbly to that obscure Grecian who in his earlier gropings had so irritated his humanitarian impatience, but whom he now saw as a repository of what was most worthy in human life. For in realizing that the spiritual structure, the humanizing product of men's thought and wisdom, kept its tenuous life so precariously, and had its life at all only in men's minds, he saw how supreme was the value of those men who shut themselves — perforce, to-day, alas — aloof from the world, mastered the records of the past, wrote their few volumes, taught, or perhaps merely preserved by their example the tradition of the love of learning. And there by that fireside, where he had so rebelled at those long ranks of books, he took up the discipline which the college had denied him, in pursuit of an end from which it had so nearly



weaned him. And though the years were gone, and though his mind was formed in its own formlessness, yet he turned eagerly to its tardy cultivation. He began in reality the life of the spirit. For he was, in the triumph of his vision, at last justified of his abiding faith that there was something there to build up.

THE END









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